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UNDERSTANDING THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD

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COKESBURY PRESS
NASHVILLE

UNDERSTANDING THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD
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Set Up, Electrotyped, Printed, and Bound by the Parthenon Press at Nashville, Tennessee, United States of America

To My
Father and Mother

PREFACE

THE INTENTION OF THIS BOOK IS TO STIMULATE A DIRECT study of the gospel materials for the sake of a clearer understanding of Jesus and as a means of discovering how the first Christians understood and presented Christianity. The men who wrote our Gospels were active missionaries. Their interests were thoroughly practical. The books they wrote were a form of preaching. They used materials that originated with and were inspired by Jesus, but their controlling interests were evangelistic rather than primarily historical. The Gospels are thus a history of early Christian evangelism as well as a report of Jesus' life and message. They more nearly have the character of preaching than of scientific biography.

The grouping of the parables under selected headings is avoided here. They are treated in the order in which they are reported in the Gospels. This serves to emphasize the bearing of context on interpretation, especially as interpretation concerns itself with the messages of the evangelists themselves.

The examination of each parable proceeds under four headings: (1) the thought sequence of the context, (2) the meaning of the parable for the evangelist, (3) the interpretation of the imagery and concepts of the parable, (4) the teaching point of the parable in the context of the ministry of Jesus. The first three steps in the exposition are simple, and it is possible to be confident of the conclusions that are reached. Whatever is said in the fourth instance is necessarily tentative and subject to considerable differences of opinion.

The author is primarily interested in religious values.

He believes that the approach made in the present study is calculated to bring out the values of the parables for religious education and evangelism.

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ALBERT E. BARNETT.

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INTRODUCTION

THE ENGLISH WORD PARABLE IS A TRANSLITERATION OF the corresponding Greek term, which, in turn, is the translation of a Hebrew word meaning "to be like." A parable is literally a comparison. The Hebrew word has the broad variety of application in the Old Testament that this suggests: a proverbial saying (I Sam. 10: 12; 24:13; Ezek. 12:22; 18:2), a taunt or byword (Deut. 28:37; I Kings 9:7; Jer. 24:9; Ezek. 14:8; II Chron. 7:20), epigrams or aphorisms (Prov. 1:6; 10:1; 25:1; Eccles. 12:9), oracles (Num. 23:7,8; 24:3,15,20,21, 23). In the New Testament, literary forms that differ from the familiar connotation are called parables: proverbial sayings (Luke 4:23; 6:39), aphorisms (Mark 7:17; Matt. 15:15), wise advice (Luke 14:7f), a riddle (Mark 4:10), similitudes (Matt. 13:34). The term is used twice in the New Testament outside the Gospels, once as the equivalent of symbol (Heb. 9:9), and again in the sense of figurative speech (Heb. 11:19).

Ordinarily, the parable is thought of as a short story taken from common life and used as an analogy for religious truth. One of the best of the older expositions of the parables of Jesus insists on the narrative character of the parable: "The character of a complete figurative history or narrative is to be regarded as the distinguishing mark of the parables strictly so called." [1] A more recent study calls the parable "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," [2] but in the selection of materials does not apply the narrative test too rigidly. Where a comparison clearly implies a story, it is usually

[1] Siegfried Goebel, *The Parables of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), p. 3.

[2] George A. Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1928), p. xv.

treated as a parable. The broader application of the definition is followed in the present study.

The uses to which they are put and their common employment of the narrative form are points of resemblance between the parable and such forms as the myth, the allegory and the fable. Each, however, has its own distinctive character. The myth is distinguished by its blending of truth with story. The narrative is itself the truth. Furthermore, the myth is speculative in interest and represents the effort of primitive imagination to explain the universe. The parable, by contrast, is distinctly social and practical in interest. The allegory differs in that its details have counterparts in meaning, whereas the parable as a whole has a single teaching point and its details are not separately interpreted. The fable is characterized by its violation of the natural and normal. It is fantastic rather than realistic. It is prudential and distinctly "this-worldly" in its teaching as against the religious emphasis of the parable.

Because Jesus used them with such rare genius, parables are associated almost exclusively with his teaching. Actually, however, the parable was a popular and entirely familiar form of Wisdom teaching. It was its popularity that led Jesus to use it. The strictest definition of the parable allows two Old Testament illustrations (II Sam. 12:1-4; Isa. 5:1-6), and a less rigid application of the narrative test would add several others (II Sam. 14:5-7; I Kings 20:39-40; Isa. 28:24-28). Parables were also used in the non-canonical Jewish writings (I Enoch 37:5; etc.) and were a popular device of Rabbinic teaching during the first several centuries of Christian history.[3]

[3] A. Feldman, *The Parables and Similes of the Rabbis*, (Cambridge University Press, 1927).

The interpretations appended to certain of the parables as they are presented in the Gospels have tended to confuse the conception of the nature of the parables and their use. These expositions by the evangelists assume the esoteric character of the teaching of the parables and so employ allegory for their interpretation. Any attempt to understand the parables, therefore, requires an interpretation of the evangelists' classical statement of their viewpoint (Mark 4:10-12; Matt. 13:10-16; Luke 8:9-11).

It is noteworthy that the statement of Jesus' purpose in using parables employs a quotation from Isaiah 6:9 (cf. Deut, 29:4; Isa. 29:10). Paul had already used this same passage (Rom. 11:8) to account for Israel's failure to accept Christ: God had "hardened" their heart so that they could not believe! Many individual Jews like Paul himself and the first disciples became followers of Jesus; but God ordained that Israel, officially and as a nation, should reject the gospel. Paul had formulated that explanation before any of the Gospels were written, and he had used the passage from Isaiah that the writers of the Gospels employ in the present instance. When Christian missionaries presented the gospel in Gentile situations they had to give some account of its very limited success in its original environment. Because it was effective for their audiences and most meaningful to themselves, they gave their solution of the problem in terms of divine predestination.

The evangelists use the saying from Isaiah with some variation of meaning. Mark represents Jesus as using parables in order that the Jews might be "hardened." It is a precautionary measure. God has certain plans and wants to avoid interference with his prearrangements. In Matthew, Jesus uses parables because the "hardening" has already taken place. It is a form of

punishment for the past. Luke more nearly agrees with Matthew than with Mark.

The "disciples," including the Twelve plus the inner circle of a larger following, made the inquiry about the purpose of teaching in parables. Luke gives the impression that the question had to do simply with the parable of the Sower, but Mark and Matthew apply it to parables in general with the parable of the Sower regarded as typical.

A general answer about the purpose of parables and a detailed exposition of the parable of the Sower are given in all three Gospels. The exposition takes the form of thoroughgoing allegory. Jesus' hearers are divided into two classes, an inner circle and "they that are without." The former are given the "secret" of the Kingdom, but it is kept from the latter either because they are incapable of comprehending it or in order that they may not lay hold upon it.

The probabilities are that this representation of Jesus' purpose for using parables corresponds more nearly to early Christian apologetic than to any ends that Jesus himself had in view. There was nothing of the esoteric in Jesus' message. Jesus pitied the multitudes, and they "heard him gladly" because they understood his message. The lines of demarcation that he recognized were spiritual rather than intellectual. His purpose in using parables was to clarify, never to obscure, his thought.

The Gospels suggest that Jesus began to use parables when opposition to his ministry developed. It was a device for keeping the unprepared from understanding him. That understanding of the chronological location of the parables, however, grew out of the predestinarian interpretation of the course of Jesus' ministry as a whole. Actually, Jesus almost certainly used parables from the first and throughout his ministry. They were

especially fitted for reaching the unchurched multitudes, and they furnished a mode of expression peculiarly adapted to the uses of a mind as artistic and essentially poetic as the mind of Jesus was. He did not have to create the parable, but merely to use it with the rare genius he possessed.

The number of the parables in the Gospels will vary with the definition of the parable. Where the narrative form is made the strict test, the number will be reduced to the minimum. The extremes range from twenty-seven [4] to fifty-three.[5] The number treated in the present exposition is forty-three.

As arranged on the basis of the divisions of Jesus' public ministry, there are three groups of parables in the Synoptic Gospels: (1) the parables that belong to Jesus' ministry in the vicinity of Capernaum; (2) those that are a part, especially in Luke, of the account of the journey through Perea to Jerusalem; (3) the parables of Passion Week. This ordering of the parables reflects both their arrangement in the sources from which the evangelists drew their materials and the emphases of the evangelists' own expositions of Christianity. It is, in general, the order of presentation in the present study because of the conviction that the context in which any given parable appears sheds some light on its meaning. Specifically, this means that Mark is followed when he gives the material, with the parallels in Matthew and Luke brought into conformity with Markan sequence. Lukan sections not appearing in Mark, with such Matthaean parallels as exist, are introduced into the Markan framework where Luke locates them. Similarly, passages peculiar to Matthew

[4] Goebel, *op cit.*

[5] A. Julicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* [2] (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1910).

are presented between the Markan and Lukan sections where a comparative reading of the three accounts would place them.

No theory of written sources accounts for the total content of the Gospels. The evangelists were authors, each with his own message. They were not merely editors of traditional materials. They used the materials of tradition creatively, and by arrangement and liberal supplementation of these resources interpreted Christianity as they understood it and as they thought it would be most meaningful in the localities where they labored. Their use of written sources is, however, evident and it explains many otherwise perplexing data. One of the most careful examinations of the whole problem of sources back of the Gospels is that of Canon Streeter.[6] He is sure that Matthew and Luke were indebted to Mark for the narrative framework they used. They had in addition to Mark a second source on which they both drew, and which was primarily composed of teaching materials. This teaching source is called "Q," and is regarded as having originated at Antioch in about 50 A.D. In addition to these sources, used by both Matthew and Luke, Streeter identifies two other sources. One of these he calls "M," which he thinks Matthew alone had, and which he locates as having developed in Jerusalem in about 65 A.D. The source peculiar to Luke originated in Caesarea in about 60 A.D. and is called "L." This nomenclature of sources is adopted throughout the present study.

In interpreting the parables, three guiding principles are followed: (1) It is assumed that a parable has a single lesson that it illustrates. The details of the story have no separate meaning apart from the central teaching point. Allegory is rejected as a legitimate prin-

[6] B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1930).

ciple of interpretation. (2) The evangelists understood and employed the parables in terms of the message they themselves wanted to deliver. What the parable meant to the several evangelists is gathered from the context in which it is given. The same parable might thus be understood in a variety of ways. Accordingly, attention is given to all accounts of the materials. (3) Jesus' message was primarily intended for his immediate hearers. The effort is made, insofar as it appears possible, to discover what he meant by the parables in the context of his own ministry. A final inquiry, of necessity left to the reader, would have to do with the present-day uses of the parables for education in religion.

THE WEDDING GUESTS

MATTHEW 9:14,15

Then the disciples of John came up to him and said, "Why is it that we and the Pharisees are keeping the fast, while your disciples are not keeping it?" Jesus said to them, "Can wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But a time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and they will fast then."

MARK 2:18-20

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were keeping a fast. And people came and asked him, "Why is it that when John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are keeping the fast, yours are not keeping it?" Jesus said to them, "Can wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But a time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and when that day comes, they will fast."

LUKE 5:33-35

They said to him, "John's disciples observe frequent fasts and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but your disciples eat and drink." Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? But other days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, in those days they will fast."

THE GOSPELS ARE PRIMARILY EXPOSITIONS OF THE MEANING of Christianity rather than historical treatises in the modern sense. The setting in which the parable of the Wedding Guests appears and the application it is given are aspects of the message of the gospel writers and bear upon interests and problems of their audiences.

The parable is employed in the three accounts as an illustration in one of the series of stories intended to show the origin and character of the conflict between Jesus and his contemporaries, and, implicitly, to state the case for Christianity in its conflicts with Jewish leaders and the followers of John the Baptist during the period when the Gospels were written. The original opponents of Jesus and the opponents of Christianity of a later day are characterized as artificial, as wedded

to tradition, as insensitive to the vital needs of men, as blind to the essential meaning and values of religion.

In the three Gospels, the preceding context is a discussion about eating with "publicans and sinners." A second point of conflict is the practice of "fasting," and the parable of the Wedding Guests is a part of Jesus' rejoinder when he is questioned about the failure of his disciples to conform to the practices of the Pharisees and the disciples of John in their observance of fasts.

Later Judaism developed the rite of fasting extensively and employed it for a variety of occasions. Such occasions as drought or public calamity would call for general fasting, but in addition to publicly proclaimed fasts pious individuals would impose fasts upon themselves regularly and on special bases. The fast that is represented as having called forth the criticism of Jesus' disciples was of this latter type. In Matthew, the disciples of John raised the question about the negligence of the disciples of Jesus. In Mark, it is "John's disciples and the Pharisees." In Luke, it is simply "they," the reference presumably being to "the Pharisees and their scribes" (vs. 30). The three accounts couple the disciples of John with the Pharisees in a way that makes them appear as a Jewish sect, stricter and superior, but definitely different from the followers of Jesus.

Fasting also became a Christian practice (cf. I Cor. 7:5; Acts 10:30; 13:3; 14:23; Luke 2:37; Didache 8:1). The statement of the Didache is especially significant: "Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays, but do you fast on Wednesdays and Fridays." Christians needed a justification for their practice that would at the same time free them from any obligation to observe Jewish fasts as the followers of John the Baptist continued to do. The evan-

gelists accomplished this by identifying Jesus with the bridegroom and interpreting the parable as an allegory of his career as Messiah. The omission of the allegorism (Matt. 9:15*b*; Mark 2:20; Luke 5:35) leaves the parable in simpler and more nearly original form.

Fasting may well have been a subject for discussion on some occasion during the ministry of Jesus, and he would have been appreciative of the real spirit of the practice. His insistence was that inner life and outward act should, however, be in correspondence, and that hypocrisy was the result whenever there was disparity between them.

If the parable of the Wedding Guests was originally employed as an illustration in his discussion of fasting, Jesus' question was, probably, "Can wedding guests fast?" By making that the question, the point of the parable becomes that fasting is unreal and artificial and therefore a matter of pretense because the natural mood is one of joyousness and feasting. Pretense is condemned as inimical to true religion, whose foundation is sincerity.

There can be no certainity, however, that a discussion of fasting was the original context of the parable. Taken out of the setting supplied in the Gospels, the parable of the Wedding Guests might have been an interpretation of religion as emancipating rather than enslaving, as designed to set men singing instead of mourning. So taken, it would exalt spontaneity above conformity, recognizing that the springs of action lie in man's inner life and making it the function of religion to deal with life where motives originate and purposes have their existence.

THE NEW PATCH AND THE OLD GARMENT

MATTHEW 9:16

"But no one sews a patch of unshrunken cloth on an old coat, for the patch will tear away from the coat, and make the hole worse than ever."

MARK 2:21

"No one sews a patch of unshrunken cloth on an old coat; or if he does, the patch tears away, the new from the old, and makes the hole worse than ever."

LUKE 5:36

He used this figure also in speaking to them: "No one tears a piece from a new coat and sews it on an old one, or if he does, he will both tear the new one and the piece from the new one will not match the old one."

THE CONTEXT OF THIS PARABLE IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS suggests that it was used by the evangelists to illustrate the inferiority of John's message by representing it as a piece of "patchwork" by contrast with a new garment.

In Matthew 11:7-19 (cf. Luke 7:24-35), criticism of John the Baptist and of the Baptist movement of the evangelists' own day becomes explicit. John is recognized as a truly great person, and yet "those who are of little importance in the Kingdom of Heaven are greater than he." He is the greatest of the old order, but the order he represents is passing, and Jesus is the embodiment and creator of a new order. This new order is so superior that its least member is greater than the greatest of the old. It is possible that the gospel writers go the length of identifying the Church and the Kingdom and, consequently, of regarding John as outside the Kingdom because he was not a member of the Church. The equivalent of this idea appears in Acts 18:25; 19:3,4.

Matthew follows Mark's version of the parable closely, but Luke varies from it by having the patch torn from another garment. The point for Luke is that two gar-

ments are ruined. The new is left with a hole in it and the old looks like patchwork. The emphasis common to the three writers is that Christianity involves a radical re-creation of life at its heart and that the Christian movement is characterized by newness of spirit.

What the writers of the Gospels understood the parable to mean is substantially the thought of Paul in Galatians. Gentile Christianity could never express itself through the forms of Judaism. It was the fatal error of John the Baptist and his followers that they tried to do this. The path of the Church was definitely different from that of the Synagogue, however, and Christians must be free to create the forms that served their newness to life. To do otherwise would mean for Christianity to lose its vital character.

The imagery of the parable is very lifelike. Whatever the context in Jesus' own ministry, it has the sound of authenticity. It may reflect the economic circumstances of Jesus and his first followers. The patched clothes of the frugal and the poor supply the picture. A really new garment would be very rare, but welcome and greatly valued. On the other hand, an old garment patched with a scrap to match was better in appearance and wearing quality than if patched with new cloth.

When viewed as coming from Jesus, the point is probably that the characteristics of vital religion are joy, freedom, the unity resulting from newness of inner life. He sees that man's life grows and renews itself from inward sources of vitality so that it has wholeness rather than a patchwork character. The vital rather than the mechanical furnishes a better analogy for religion. It is the difference of buoyant health from artificial "make-up."

NEW WINE AND OLD WINE-SKINS

MATTHEW 9:17
"And people do not put new wine into old wine-skins, or if they do, the skins burst, and the wine runs out and the skins are spoiled. But people put new wine into fresh wine-skins, and so both are saved."

MARK 2:22
"And no one pours new wine into old wine-skins; or if he does, the wine bursts the skins, and the wine is lost, and the skins too. New wine has to be put into fresh skins."

LUKE 5:37-39
"And nobody puts new wine into old wine-skins, or if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and run out, and the skins will be spoiled. New wine has to be put into fresh skins. No one after drinking old wine wants new, for he says, 'The old is better!' "

THE CONTEXT OF THIS PARABLE IS THE SAME AS THAT OF the two just treated. It complements the general emphasis of the series by representing Christianity as vital, growing, expansive due to its possession of the Spirit and its power to impart the Spirit to members of the Christian community.

The imagery of the parable lends itself to the application that was evidently the thought of the writers of the Gospels. The old skins are presumably no longer usable because worn out. The wine may be new in either the sense of having been recently made or of being such wine as had not been known before (cf. John 2:10).

There was among the Gentile cults the conception of wine as "spirituous" in the sense that it contained the essence of the cult deity, with the result that intoxication was a popular means of regeneration or apotheosis. In the account of Pentecost, one explanation of the charismatic inspiration of the disciples was, "They have too much new wine!" (Acts 2:13). Possession of the Spirit is for the authors of Acts and the Fourth Gospel the distinctive mark of superiority (cf. Acts

19:1-7; John 2:3-10; 3:5; 4:14; 6:55; etc.). Water is a symbol of the inferior rivals of Christianity, whether Judaism, the water-baptized followers of John, or the Gentile cults. Wine, by contrast, was made to represent Christianity as colorful, invigorating, "spiritual." It is highly probable that something of this connotation of "new wine" was in the thinking of the earlier evangelists.

In Matthew 9:17*b* the wording deserves special attention: "People put new wine into fresh wine-skins, and so both are saved." The final clause has no parallel in Mark and Luke. Is it the thought of the evangelist that Christianity and Judaism are preferably kept intact as entirely distinct religions? Or is this merely an underscoring of the necessity of fresh containers for "new wine"? Probably, the "skins" are viewed as important because they preserve the wine. The wine alone is inherently precious and the value of the skins is purely instrumental.

Luke also (5:39) has an appended statement that is without parallel in Matthew and Mark: "No one after drinking old wine wants new, for he says, 'The old is better!' " The saying was probably a separate parable brought into its present context by the evangelist for the sake of an emphasis that is not wholly clear. It has something of the sound of the sentiment of Ecclesiasticus 9:10:

> "Do not forsake an old friend,
> For a new one is not equal to him.
> A new friend is new wine;
> When it grows old, you will enjoy drinking it."

and of Pirqe Aboth 4:28:

"He who learns from the young, unto what is he like?
To one who . . . drinks wine straight from the wine press.

And he who learns from the old, unto what is he like?
To one who drinks old wine."

It is hardly conceivable that the evangelist desired to justify Jewish hostility to Christianity or to excuse the disciples of John for retaining their allegiance to him instead of becoming followers of Jesus. More probably he sounds a warning that merit is relative and that something that is good when considered alone becomes of secondary value by comparison with newly discovered values. It is his way of saying that it is to the discredit of the Jew, or the follower of John, or the devotee of some Hellenistic cult if he permits the familiar and the accustomed to arouse opposition to Christianity, by comparison with which all other ways to God are detours and bypaths.

Taking the parable in the substantial form in which the three Gospels present it, what must have been its original teaching point? In the context of Jesus' own message, it probably distinguished the primary character of religion from the instrumental and therefore secondary character of all religious forms and institutions. Religion viewed in vital terms must be left free. Forms and institutions may serve but must never confine developing life. The mark of their usefulness is their elasticity, and they must never be permitted to usurp the importance which belongs alone to that which they serve.

WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

MATTHEW 7:24-27

"Everyone, therefore, who listens to this teaching of mine and acts upon it, will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. And the rain fell, and the rivers rose, and the winds blew, and beat about that house, and it did not go down, for its foundations were on rock. And anyone who listens to this teaching of mine and does not act upon it, will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. And the rain fell and the rivers rose, and the winds blew and beat about that house, and it went down, and its downfall was complete."

LUKE 6:46-49

"Why do you call me: 'Lord! Lord!' and not do what I tell you? If anyone comes to me and listens to this teaching of mine and acts upon it, I will show you whom he is like. He is like a man who was building a house, who dug deep and laid his foundation upon the rock, and when there was a flood the torrent burst upon that house and could not shake it, because it was well built. But the man who listens to it, and does not act upon it, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation. The torrent burst upon it, and it collapsed at once, and the wreck of that house was complete."

THE STATEMENTS WITH WHICH THIS PARABLE IS INTRODUCED in the Gospels are virtually identical and indicate its meaning for the evangelists. Matthew, "Everyone, therefore, who listens to this teaching of mine and acts upon it, will be like a sensible man. . . ."; Luke, "If anyone comes to me and listens to this teaching of mine and acts upon it, I will show you whom he is like." Obedience to the words of Jesus is the obligation of the Christian. In the Fourth Gospel, his words are "a message of eternal life" (John 6:68; cf. 2:22; 4:50; 12:47; 14:24; 15:3,7).

The title of "Lord" (Matt. 7:22; Luke 6:46) gives meaning to this emphasis on the authority of Jesus' words. It designates Jesus as one who is entitled to be obeyed. To call Jesus "Lord" and overlook the evident implications is to merit the most severe condemnation. Matthew strengthens this emphasis by the statement of verse 28 (cf. Mark 1:22): "The crowds were astounded

at his teaching, for he taught them like one who had authority. . . ."

The atmosphere of the context of the parable is that of the Apostolic Church, where the acknowledgment of Jesus as "Lord" was the equivalent of a profession of Christian faith: "For if with your lips you acknowledge the message that Jesus is Lord . . . you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9); ". . . And everyone should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, and thus glorify God the Father" (Phil. 2:11). The situation faced by the Gospel writers is one in which this profession has become mere "lip service." Faith has become "the faith" (cf. Jude 3), with the consequent danger that it receives formal assent but no longer determines the basic decisions and procedures of life (cf. James 1:22f; 2:14-26). There are those within the Church who externally resemble genuine believers, but whose allegiance is purely nominal and formal. They are warned that the realities will appear in the Judgment, where obedience will be the test.

In the parable itself, two builders seek a site near a stream. In Matthew nothing is said about the "wise" builder digging through sand to solid rock. The two builders choose two sites, one on outcropping rock and the other on level sand, perhaps a dry stream bed. The one looks toward the time when heavy rains will fall and send a flood which only a rock foundation can withstand. The other looks only at present circumstances and builds a house as though he were pitching a tent to be moved when emergency threatened. Inevitable emergency reduces the latter house to complete wreckage. Luke's version makes the emphasis that the "wise" builder "dug deep" until rock was found, and there "laid his foundation." The foolish builder by contrast constructed his house "on the ground without any foun-

dation." Destruction is due to the flood rather than as in Matthew to the storm in its entirety. Diligence would seem to be the emphasis in Luke, as foresight is in Matthew. Judgment is a part of the framework in both instances, but it is more fundamental in Matthew's than in Luke's version of the parable.

The original context and point of the parable are difficult of recovery. It may well have been a warning against the dangers of inertia. The positive teaching would be that security and divine approval belong to those who strenuously bestir themselves. There is rock on which men may build securely, but the builder must discover or dig through to it. God bestirs himself in the interest of selected ends. He is a "living God." The religious man will share this purposeful, energetic disposition. The most convincing evidence that a man is religious is that he works energetically in the confidence that diligence belongs to the nature of things and that effort does not eventuate in futility.

CHILDREN AT PLAY

MATTHEW 11:16-19

"But to what can I compare this present age? It is like children sitting about in the bazaars and calling out to their playmates,

'We have played the flute for you, and you would not dance!
We have wailed and you would not beat your breasts!'

For when John came, he neither ate nor drank, and people said, 'He has a demon!' Now that the Son of Man has come, he does eat and drink, and people say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drinker, the companion of tax-collectors and irreligious people!' And yet Wisdom is vindicated by her actions!"

LUKE 7:31-35

"So what is there to which I can compare the men of this age? What are they like? They are like children sitting about in the bazaar and calling out to one another,

'We have played the flute for you, and you would not dance!
We have wailed and you would not weep!'

"For when John the Baptist came, he did not eat any bread or drink any wine, and you said, 'He has a demon!' Now that the Son of Man has come, he does eat and drink, and you say, "Look at him! A glutton and a drinker, the companion of tax-collectors and irreligious people!' So wisdom is vindicated by all who are really wise."

THE CONTEXT OF THE PARABLE AND THE APPLICATION OF its contrasts reflect the interests and the times of the writers of the Gospels. They are hardly the original setting and emphasis of the story. It is to be said, however, that both evangelists apparently drew their materials from Q and that the parable was there associated with a collection of sayings about John the Baptist.

Jesus is represented as looking back upon himself and John as though they were figures of a great past. In turn, John appears to turn over in his mind the problem of the Messiahship of Jesus (Matt. 11:4ff; Luke 7:22ff). As in Deuteronomy 34:6 Moses is a figure of the past to the writer of the account ("But to this day no one knows his burial-place"), so in Matthew 11:12 (cf. Luke 16:16) Jesus and John seem to be figures of history separated from the time of the evangelists by a period of years ("But from the time of John the Baptist until now . . .").

The writers of the Gospels probably desired at one and the same time to commend Christianity on the basis of its early relations with the movement of John the Baptist and to explain to the advantage of their own cause his ministry and message. This is certainly the light in which the references to him in the Fourth Gospel are best understood.[1] That Luke was aware of the claims and proportions of the movement is clear from Acts 18:25; 19:3,4. Matthew seems to have been similarly concerned.

The unpopularity of Jesus and John implied in the context hardly fits the period of their lives. Both were viewed with suspicion by political and ecclesiastical leaders precisely because of their tremendous popularity with the people. The failure of John to become an impressive figure in Jewish literature indicates that his popularity waned. This may have been due to the relationship to Christianity assigned him by early missionaries, with the result that John shared the disfavor that came upon the Christian movement as the sequel to the early persecutions and the animosities engendered after the Jewish War. The evangelists would assume that this unpopularity went back to a time older than their own.

John's mode of life is described as ascetic (cf. Matt. 3:4; Luke 4:1). The charge of demon possession, as in the case of Jesus (Mark 3:30; John 10:20), was the equivalent of picturing him as a non-conformist and a

[1] "The intention of these many passages in which the figure of the Baptist is so carefully subordinated to that of Jesus can scarcely admit of doubt. If the writer considers it necessary to prove that John was not the Christ, he must know of some who have claimed that dignity for him. Not only so, but he must regard the question with more than historical interest. It may well have been that in the Baptist's own lifetime extravagant claims were put forward in his behalf; but if they had been abandoned after his death there was no need to disprove them by elaborate evidence." E. F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel* [2] (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1923), p. 79.

protestant with reference to scribal canons. The charge may have been a sort of "emotional brickbat" hurled at anyone whose views and behavior differed from the commonplace, more or less as the charge of "Communism" is today. "His name is in the Red Network" would be a very good twentieth century equivalent.

By contrast, Jesus' mode of life is described as warmly human and social. He is represented as entering normally and joyously into the ordinary associations of people. Instead of isolating himself, he multiplied his human contacts, especially with the outcast and the ostracized, thereby incurring the charge of worldliness and irreligion. During the first two centuries, Christianity made its most powerful appeal to the dispossessed and the humble (cf. I Cor. 1:26f), and this representation of Jesus would be exceedingly appealing to the audiences of the evangelists.

The differences between the two versions of the parable are not of sufficient consequence to merit comment. The picture is of children at play. They are divided into two groups, and disagreement of some sort keeps them from enjoying the occasion. In Matthew, one group is willing and the other unwilling to play. In Luke, neither group will play as proposed by the other.

Jesus and John are pictured as representing a variety of interest and emphasis, but as resembling in that both were positive, aggressive, morally serious, practical rather than theoretical and speculative, characterized by enthusiasm and confidence rather than by apathy and pessimism, determined to obey God's will as each knew it. They wanted to "play the game," not merely discuss it. They invited their generation to leave the sidelines and become players instead of standing idly and pointing out the errors of those actually on the field.

The phrase, "this present age" or "the men of this

generation," has the general import of Deuteronomy 32:5; Psalm 95:10f.; Acts 2:40; Philippians 2:14,15. It expresses strong disapproval. They of "this present age" are like children who ignore the game in the interest of petty quarrels. The comparison may look in either of two directions: (1) The two groups may be viewed separately with the comparison drawn between one group and "this present age." This would be the group against whom the complaint is made that they will not play, but instead find fault. (2) The two groups are viewed together as quarreling, each to have its way, and getting nowhere. They may be viewed together also, not as seriously quarreling, but as playing a game in which quarreling is the point, and to be taken no more seriously than children at play, the point being that nothing serious engages their attention.

"Vindication" (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:35) means to be shown right by reference to a given norm, the norm in this instance being "Wisdom." "Wisdom" is the personification of an aspect of God's being. God is represented as entering actively into the human scene to bring his will to pass. They "who are really wise" embody the spirit of "Wisdom" and by their glad obedience acquit her of false charges. Jesus and John are the pre-eminent examples of "all who are really wise" and refute the disrepute into which "this present age" brings "Wisdom." This sense fits perfectly into the Lukan context following 7:29,30. "Vindicate" in verse 35 refers to verse 29, where "all the people, even the tax-collectors . . . acknowledged the justice of God's demands, by accepting baptism from John, but the Pharisees and experts in the Law thwarted God's purpose for themselves, by refusing to be baptized by him." "Wisdom" in verse 35 similarly refers to "God's pur-

pose" in verse 30, thus identifying the truly "wise" with those who responded to John and Jesus.

Perversity or frivolity may either have been the original object of criticism in the parable. Religion would be viewed as furnishing inspiration for practical effectiveness. To regard religion as purely theoretical would miss its point. It never leaves its devotee as a mere spectator; it is designed to bring him into the game.

For Jesus, religion was a resource for effective, redemptive activity in human situations. He felt that the basic agreements and understanding brought about by religion would outweigh ordinary differences and enable religious people to join their efforts in harmonious co-operation. Unity in the joyous service of God should be the mark of spiritual maturity.

In the first instance, the parable may have been used by Jesus to shame Israel for its attitude of pessimism and contempt toward the Gentiles.[2] The plea in that case was that the perversity and stupidity of the Gentiles could be transformed into hospitality toward the truth by a demonstration of the truth of God by Israel in life and deed.

[2] A. T. Cadoux, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), p. 111.

THE TWO DEBTORS

LUKE 7:36-50

One of the Pharisees asked him to have dinner with him, and he went to the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. Now there was a woman in the town who was leading a sinful life, and when she learned that he was having dinner at the Pharisee's house, she got an alabaster flask of perfume, and came and stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to wet his feet with her tears, and she wiped them with her hair, and kissed them, and put the perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself,

"If this man were really a prophet, he would know who and what the woman is who is touching him, for she leads a wicked life."

Jesus answered him, and said to him,

"Simon, there is something I want to say to you."

He said,

"Proceed, Master."

"Two men were in debt to a money-lender. One owed him a hundred dollars and the other ten. As they could not pay him, he canceled what they owed him. Now which of them will be more attached to him?"

Simon answered,

"The one, I suppose, for whom he canceled most."

"You are right," he said. And turning to the woman, he said to Simon,

"Do you see this woman? I came to your house; you did not give me any water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but from the moment I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put any oil upon my head, but she has put perfume upon my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, many as they are, are forgiven, for she has loved me so much. But the man with little to be forgiven loves me but little."

And he said to her,

"Your sins are forgiven!"

The men at table with him began to say to themselves,

"Who is this man, who even forgives sins?"

But he said to the woman,

"It is your faith that has saved you. Go in peace."

THE STORY OF THE ANOINTING OF JESUS IN THE HOME OF Simon the Pharisee (vss. 36-40) is the setting for the parable of the Two Debtors and determines the application of the parable for the evangelist. The suggestion of a relationship of some sort between this story and that of the anointing in the house of Simon the leper (Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9) is very strong. Various opinions

of the character of this relationship are possible: (1) They are similar but entirely separate incidents, although it is conceivable that acquaintance with the earlier incident suggested its repetition during Passion Week. (2) Luke deliberately altered Mark's account of an anointing of Jesus by a "clean" woman in the house of an "unclean" man, a leper, and made it an anointing by an "unclean" woman in the house of a "clean" man, a Pharisee. The purpose of such an alteration would be the exposition of one of Luke's favorite themes, Jesus' friendliness toward "outcasts." (3) Luke's special source L had the story as he gives it, and in its present immediate context. Luke preferred this version to that of Mark because it illustrated his theme better. There remains, of course, the strong probability that the two accounts are variant versions of the same incident.[1]

The narrative and the parable are employed to deal with both phases of the charge in verse 34: "Now that the Son of Man has come, he does eat and drink, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drinker, the companion of tax-collectors and irreligious people!'" They serve also further to exalt Jesus as pre-eminently "wise" (vs. 35), while picturing Simon in all his supposed "wisdom" as singularly obtuse (cf. vss. 30ff.). Jesus dines in the home of a Pharisee, but there as at all times he is accessible to "sinners." He mingles freely with all classes without ever permitting himself to be isolated by the barriers and reservations of any group. In this instance, while a guest at the table of a Pharisee, he does not permit the circumstances to embarrass the "sinner" or to limit the manifestation of his friendliness toward the "sinner" as well as toward Simon.

In the sequel to the restoration of the son of the Widow of Nain (vss. 16, 17), the people "praised God,

[1] Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

and said, 'A great prophet has appeared among us!' and 'God has not forgotten his people!' " (cf. Deut. 18:15). But Simon, typifying the character of those who "thwarted God's purpose for themselves" (vs. 30f.), discounted this estimate of Jesus on the ground that had he known, as a prophet must have done (cf. John 4:19), the sinful character of this woman, he would never have run the risk of being defiled by her nearness.

Jesus demonstrates the inadequacy of the Pharisee's criterion by transcending it in two directions. To Simon's amazement, he shows that he not only knows the woman but Simon as well, whose unexpressed reflections he draws out into the open for criticism. He then goes further to show that true prophetic insight issues in sympathy and love rather than in revulsion and self-isolation. The description of the woman has the connotation of disgust and contempt. She was probably a prostitute. She may or may not have recently repented and determined to live differently, and Simon may or may not have known it. In any instance, Jesus takes her presence as a challenge to remedy her condition, and he is certain that sympathy and forgiveness rather than avoidance and contempt will open the way.

On the woman's part, a notoriously sinful past and a newly aroused, overmastering love for Jesus are the outstanding facts. The interpretation of the place and sequence of "forgiveness" depends on whether the parable is regarded as governing the story, or vice versa. The parable and verse 50 indicate that forgiveness follows "faith" and that love is the final outcome. On the other hand, verses 47,48 suggest that the woman's love resulted in her being forgiven. If the story is read with the parable omitted, its force seems to be that Jesus shows himself to be God's best and truest messenger by proclaiming forgiveness on the simple basis of repentant

love. "Love" and "faith" are not to be too sharply defined. The inner meaning of both is entrustment, devotedness. The two shade into each other and in instances such as the present may properly be viewed as aspects of one another.

In the parable itself, both debtors recognized their indebtedness. Neither was able to pay. In their inability to pay, they were equal even though the difference between the amounts they owed was considerable. The basis of gratitude is the debtor's attitude toward what he owes rather than the amount that may be involved. The man with the "smaller debt" merely throws the other into clearer relief, and there is no intention that the relative smallness of his indebtedness account for his smallness of gratitude. Profound love for God has the result of a deeper sense of the sinfulness of sin, so that the "much" and the "little" disclose the sinner's awareness and estimate rather than a quantitative judgment on God's part.

In the context of Jesus' own life, the parable may have been a part of his reply to some protest, friendly or otherwise, against the company in which he was frequently found. He may have been advised to protect his influence by associating more consistently with the privileged and fortunate. His reply in that event would be the equivalent of insisting that influence was not worth having except as it could be redemptively used and that it really did not exist when it required protection. The parable would lend itself to such purpose by subtly engaging the critic in self-condemnation.

More probably the parable was an aspect of Jesus' teaching on forgiveness. It would serve admirably as a twin for the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:21-35), where the man who had been forgiven

"much" showed a lack of gratitude by refusing to forgive the "little" due him from a fellow-servant.

Jesus' teaching expressed the principle that governed his social behavior. He was profoundly convinced of the constructive value of forgiveness. Human nature, in his judgment, responds spontaneously and desirably to respect, sympathy, and worthy expectation. The reality of an obligation is not denied but rather emphasized and made more clearly recognizable by generosity rather than by legal severity.

THE SOWER

MATTHEW 13:3-9

And he told them many things in figures, and said to them, "A sower went out to sow, and as he was sowing, some of the seed fell by the path and the birds came and ate it up, and some fell on rocky ground where there was not much soil and it sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, but when the sun came up it was scorched and withered up, because it had no root. And some of it fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it out. And some fell on good soil, and yielded some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty-fold. Let him who has ears listen!"

MARK 4:2-8

He taught them many lessons in figures, and said to them in the course of his teaching, "Listen: A sower went out to sow, and as he was sowing, some of the seed chanced to fall by the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some of it fell on rocky ground, and where there was not much soil, and it sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, but when the sun came up, it was scorched, and withered up, because it had no root. Some of the seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it out, and it yielded no grain. And some fell on good soil, and came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold." And he said, "Let him who has ears be sure to listen!"

LUKE 8:4-8

When a great throng was gathering and people were coming to him from one town after another, he said in his figurative way, "A sower went out to sow his seed. As he was sowing, some of the seed fell by the path and was trodden on, and the wild birds ate it up. And some of it fell upon the rock, and when it sprang up it withered, because it had no moisture. And some fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. And some fell on good soil, and grew up and yielded a hundred fold!" As he said this he called out, "Let him who has ears to hear with, listen!"

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER COMES FIRST IN A COLLECtion of parables that Matthew and Mark introduce at this point in their narratives. The materials common to the two collections are: (1) the parable of the Sower, (2) an explanation of the use of parables as a teaching device, (3) an exposition of the parable of the Sower as a parable of Soils, (4) the parable of the Mustard Seed. Luke places the first three sections of this common material together (8:4-15), but gives the parable of the Mustard Seed with its twin, the parable of the Leaven,

in a different context (13:18-21). Luke also places elsewhere (10:23) the saying of Matthew 13:16,17, "But blessed are your eyes, for they do see, and your ears, for they do hear. For I tell you, many prophets and upright men have longed to see what you see, and could not see it, and to hear what you hear, and could not hear it." For Matthew, the saying refers to the truths embodied in the parables, but for Luke to what the Seventy witnessed on their mission and to their triumphant report (10:17), "Master, when we use your name the very demons submit to us!" Mark does not have the saying at all. Matthew alone has the parable of the Tares (13:24-30, 36-43), and only Mark has the parable of the Fruitbearing Earth (4:26-29).

Matthew reproduces Mark's version of the parable with but few alterations. Luke treats the material more freely, and by comparison his version is shorter, but the gist of his story is the same. In detail, the Lukan version has the following variations: of the seed that "fell by the path" Luke adds, "It was trodden on"; the birds that ate the seed he calls "birds of heaven"; the withering is due to a lack of moisture rather than a lack of roots; of the seed that fell on productive soil Luke mentions only that which produced "a hundred fold."

The location of this parable at the head of the collection in Matthew and Mark, the elaborate exposition of it, and its association with the explanation of the use of parables suggest that it was a sort of pattern parable. It is not unlikely that it introduced a collection of parables which ante-dated the Synoptic Gospels, and on which they drew as a source.

The understanding of the parable that distinctly belongs to the evangelists is suggested in the exhortation, "Let him who has ears be sure to listen!" This is more

than an invitation to thoughtful and sympathetic attention such as is found in Isaiah 50:4,5. In keeping with the explanation of the use of parables in Matthew 13:11-17; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9,10, the formula represents the parable as having esoteric meaning. It is of a piece with Paul's statement in I Corinthians 2:6,7:

> "Yet there is a wisdom that we impart when we are with people who have a mature faith, but it is not what this world calls wisdom, nor what the authorities of this world, doomed as they are to pass away, would call so. But it is a mysterious divine wisdom that we impart, hitherto kept secret, and destined by God before the world began for our glory. It is a wisdom unknown to any of the authorities of this world. . . ."

Further light is shed by the usage of the Apocalypse of John (see 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9,18). The thought is plainly of truth expressed in "mystery" or "riddle" and intended for the "spiritually" endowed. The requirement is for endowment such as is described in I Corinthians 12-14 rather than of intelligence or character. It is inspired, or supernaturally bestowed, and belongs to the "initiated." "Outsiders" or "babes" in Christ describe persons who lack this requisite.

In the Apocalypse, the hidden knowledge or wisdom is the inspired insight into the divine meaning of the "signs of the evil times." The uninstructed onlooker sees only blackness and disaster in prospect, but in this blackness and disaster the spiritually enlightened see eschatological meanings that tell of the "end of the Age" and the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom. The "hidden thing" may be this or that in particular instances, but the fundamental conception is the same.

The story itself may be read in either of two ways. The sowing rather than the sower may be regarded as

the central interest. So taken, the emphasis would be on the fate of the seed as shown in the results from the several types of soil. This reading of the story proceeds from an acceptance of the purpose of parables as the unfolding of the "mysteries of the Kingdom." More probably, the sower, not the sowing, deserves primary attention. So taken, the story is that of a farmer who at the proper time does his work. Disappointment and loss are elements in his experience, but they are neither the whole nor the main aspect. Success predominates, and despite some losses, there is a harvest that makes all that it cost worthwhile. The generosity with which he sows demonstrates his confidence in a harvest and his desire that no ground be passed over that promises a yield.

The explanation of the parable given in the Gospels transforms it into an allegory. Taken by many as from Jesus, this explanation has confused the interpretation of this and other parables. If the parable of the Sower were known to the modern reader of the New Testament without the accompanying explanation, it would probably never occur to anyone that it required this or any similarly elaborate exposition.

The interpretation may be related to the pessimistic advice of Jeremiah 4:3:

> "Break up your fallow ground,
> And sow not among thorns. . . ."

At any rate, it turns the parable into a delineation of the types of character disclosed in the varying reactions of hearers of the Christian message. The responsibility of the hearers becomes the teaching point.

Almost certainly, for Jesus and those who heard him, the parable was a sort of resume of his experience as a preacher. He faced obstacles that were real, but they

in no way reduced the certainty of success in the main. Partial failures were overbalanced by the confidence in ultimate and abounding victory. God is viewed as the guarantor of results, and this religious faith becomes the explanation of the confident optimism and tireless energy with which Jesus proposed that the religious man render his service.

The parable furnishes no warrant for a doctrine of "gradualism" in the coming of the Kingdom. It is nowhere the thought of Jesus or the evangelists that the Kingdom comes gradually, as a dull world comprehends and accepts Jesus' message. Wherever Jesus deals with eschatology, his thought is couched in apocalyptic rather than evolutionary conceptions. A great deal of his teaching, however, has no reference to eschatology and would be unaffected one way or the other by his philosophy of history. The parable of the Sower is of this latter character.

EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

MATTHEW 13:18-23

"You must listen closely then to the figure of the sower. When anyone hears the teaching of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and robs him of the seed that has been sown in his mind. That is what was sown along the path. And what was sown upon the rocky soil means the man who hears the message and at once accepts it joyfully, but it takes no real root in him, and lasts only a little while, and when trouble or persecution comes because of the message, he gives it up at once. And what was sown among the thorns means the man who listens to the message, and then the worries of the time and the pleasure of being rich choke the message out, and it yields nothing. And what was sown in good ground means the man who listens to the message and understands it, and yields one a hundred, and another sixty, and another thirty-fold."

MARK 4:13-20

And Jesus said, "If you do not understand this figure, then how will you understand my other figures? What the sower sows is the message. The ones by the path are those into whose hearts the message falls, and as soon as they hear it Satan comes and carries off the message that has been sown in their hearts. It is so too with the ones sown on the rocky ground; they gladly accept the message as soon as they hear it, but it takes no real root in them and they last only a little while; then when trouble or persecution comes because of the message they give it up at once. It is different with those sown among the thorns. They are people who listen to the message, but the worries of the time and the pleasure of being rich and passions for other things creep in and choke the message out and it yields nothing. And the ones sown in good ground are the people who listen to the message and welcome it and yield thirty, sixty, even a hundred-fold."

LUKE 8:11-15

This is what the figure means. The seed is God's message. The ones by the path are those who hear, and then the devil comes and carries off the message from their hearts, so that they may not believe it and be saved. The ones on the rock are those who receive the message joyfully when they first hear it, but it takes no real root. They believe for a little while, and then in the time of trial they draw back. And what falls among the thorns means those who listen and pass on, and the worries and wealth and pleasures of life stifle them and they yield nothing. But the seed in the good soil means those who listen to the message and keep it in good, true hearts, and yield unfailingly."

IN MATTHEW, THE DISCIPLES ARE REPRESENTED AS MAKING a general inquiry as to why Jesus used parables (vs. 10). In Mark, "those who stayed about him with the Twelve

asked him about the figures he had used" (vs. 10f.). In Luke, "his disciples asked him what this figure meant" (vs. 9). In the three accounts, the Explanation is an answer to this inquiry.

Matthew prefaces the Explanation with a pronouncement of "blessedness" upon those who understand as the disciples do (vss. 16,17). Mark seems to chide the inquirers for not understanding (vs. 13). Luke goes directly into the Explanation without saying anything about the inquirers, Matthew's beatitude appearing in an entirely different context (10:23,24). The absence of Mark's rebuke from Matthew and Luke is probably a deliberate avoidance of what might seem to be a derogatory reference to the disciples, who had become "holy apostles" and with the prophets the "foundation" of the Church (cf. Eph. 2:20; 3:5; Jude 17; II Peter 3:2; Rev. 18:20).

Mark (vs. 13) and Luke (vs. 11) identify the seed as "the word." Matthew has no parallel for this statement and appears to think primarily of the sown field, although he does have (vs. 19) the phrase, "the word of the Kingdom." In all three accounts, the soils cease to represent the hearers after the seed are sown. The seed and the growing grain then come to typify hearers. The "birds" are identified as a single evil being, in Matthew "the Evil One," in Mark, Satan, and in Luke, the Devil.

The explanation is a thoroughgoing allegory and reflects the hand of the evangelists rather than Jesus' authentic words. It teaches a number of co-ordinate lessons rather than a single one. It entirely inverts the natural emphasis of the parable. Except for the bare mention of the Sower in Mark (vs. 14), this central figure of the parable disappears, and the soils and growing grain take the center of attention. The very

great possibilities of failure supplant the prospect of predominant success, and the glorious harvest of the parable is reduced to a barely noticeable detail. The parable seems to have become a sermon theme for the evangelists, and the sermon reflects the interests and problems that belong to them rather than to Jesus.

The Explanation has its natural context in the Apostolic Age as is shown by the impressive parallels it finds there in literature. The "word" as the Christian message and as able to transform the believing heart is somewhat akin to Paul's thought in I Thessalonians 2:13 and throughout the Fourth Gospel (cf. 5:24; 6:63; 8:31; etc.). Satan is characteristically the chief supernatural menace to the work of the missionary (cf. I Thess. 2:18; 3:2f.; Eph. 6:12). Obedience to the message (James 1:22f.) is the only credential of the Christian, and the difficulty with the Church is that the faith of so many members is non-productive (James 2:17,20,26).

It is to be kept in mind that to an inner circle of disciples "has been intrusted the secret of the reign of God," whereas "to those outsiders everything is offered in figures." Paul has said of certain of the Corinthians, "I could not treat you as spiritual persons; I had to treat you just as creatures of flesh and blood, as babies in Christian living. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it" (I Cor. 3:1f.). The Explanation evidently represents what for the evangelists was "solid food" as contrasted with "milk." The parable is represented as Jesus' way of communicating truth to "spiritual persons" who are a sort of inner circle of disciples, and the hearers of the evangelists are exhorted to enter more profoundly into the meanings of Christianity and thus become intimates of Jesus in their own generation.

THE TARES

MATTHEW 13:24-30

Another figure which he used in speaking to them was this:
"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while people were asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. And when the wheat came up and ripened, the weeds appeared too. And the owner's slaves came to him and said, 'Was not the seed good that you sowed in your field, sir? So where did these weeds come from?' He said to them, 'This is some enemy's doing.' And they said to him, 'Do you want us to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, for in gathering up the weeds you may uproot the wheat. Let them both grow together until the harvest time, and when we harvest I will direct the reapers to gather up the weeds first and tie them up in bundles to burn, but get the wheat into my barn.' "

THE FIVE SAYINGS OF MARK 4:21-25 APPEAR IN MATTHEW 5:15; 10:26*b*; 11:15 and 13:9; 7:2*b*; 13:12. In place of the parable of the Fruit-bearing Earth which immediately succeeds in Mark (4:26-29), Matthew introduces the parable of the Tares. In verse 34, Matthew adopts Mark 4:33 as a conclusion; but instead of Mark's statement (4:34), he illustrates Jesus' "private" expositions of parables with his explanation of the parable of the Tares. He then adds three parables found only in his Gospel, the Hidden Treasure, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Dragnet.

It is possible that Matthew found this parable elsewhere, preferred it to Mark's parable of the Fruit-bearing Earth (4:26-29), and because of its similarity to the Markan passage introduced it at this point in the framework which continues to be Mark's. More probably, the parable of the Tares is a build-up from Mark 4:26-29, is definitely later than Jesus, and reflects a time when the Church and the Kingdom have been practically identified, with the result that the Kingdom as the Church contains both good and bad people, a situation that will find correction only at the Judgment.

Throughout Matthew 13, the Church and the Kingdom are practically indistinguishable. The parables of the Tares, the Dragnet, and the Explanation of the parable of the Sower reflect the evangelist's vivid awareness of the contradiction and conflict between the actual character of the Christian community and its exalted ideals. The Church rather than the imminent Kingdom of apocalyptic expectation represents for the generation of the evangelist the historical fruition of the message and work of Jesus. The tacit assumption is naturally that it was so with Jesus.

The story is that of a farmer who sowed wheat in his field. Afterward, an enemy "came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away." This was done "while people were asleep," which gave the enemy uninterrupted opportunity to carry out his evil purpose. The soil and the seed were good, and except for the activity of the enemy the crop would have been a complete success. The problem of the farmer is to decide whether the loss of wheat will be greater or less if he acts immediately to root out the weeds or waits until the harvest time. He shows himself to be a wise man by waiting.

There is point in the clause, "while people were asleep." It has definitely eschatological significance and is to be read in the light of such passages of warning as I Thessalonians 5:1-6; Matthew 24:42-44 (cf. Luke 12:39,40); Luke 21:34-36; Mark 13:33-36; Matthew 25:5,6,13. There is to be a Divine Judgment in God's own time. On that Day, God himself, in his perfect wisdom, will separate the evil from the good, assigning just punishment to the one and gracious reward to the other. The time of this Judgment is unpredictable. A state of affairs exists, for the author of the parable, where within the Church good and bad are inter-

mingled. This intermingling is in such numbers as to constitute a grave problem and to require the formulation of a policy. There were rigorists who probably insisted on the purging of the unworthy as the only means of establishing an ideal community, whereas others were inclined to leave to God the perfect execution of his will. The latter preferred to let the existing state of affairs continue until altered by God himself, their concern being to be ready for the Day whenever it might come.

THE FRUIT-BEARING EARTH

MARK 4:26-29

"The reign of God," he said, "is like a man scattering seed on the ground, and then sleeping at night and getting up by day, while the seed sprouts and comes up, without his knowing it. The ground of itself is productive, putting forth first a blade, then a head, then fully developed wheat in the head. But as soon as the crop will let him, the man goes in with his sickle, for the harvest time has come."

THE PARABLE OF THE FRUIT-BEARING EARTH IS PRESERVED in Mark alone. Its omission by Matthew and Luke may be variously explained. Possibly it was omitted through accident by a copyist from the text of Mark known to the other Synoptic writers. The clause, "And he said," is used as an introductory formula in Mark 4:21,26,30, and the eye of the copyist could easily have passed from one to three instead of from one to two. The result, in that case, would have been the omission of vss. 26-29. Another and equally plausible possibility is that Matthew and Luke deliberately omitted the parable because of a preference for pairing the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven. In Mark, the parables of the Fruit-bearing Earth and the Mustard Seed are paired. It is to be remembered, also, that an elaborated and carefully adapted form of the parable may appear in Matthew's parable of the Tares.

Throughout the period in which the books that compose the New Testament were written, the coming of the Kingdom was an acute problem. The expectation of its imminence supplied inspiration for the early phases of missionary activity, and its delay required radical revisions of thought and procedure. The maintenance of morale among missionaries themselves, as well as among ordinary Christians, was no easy task. The author of II Peter denounces as "mockers" (3:4) those who ask in their discouragement and confusion,

"Where is his promised coming?" but in the Apocalypse it is the martyred saints (6:10) who cry, "Holy and true Master, how long is it to be before you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" The Epistle of James approximates the viewpoint of Mark in urging patience and courage (5:7ff.):

"So be patient, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer has to wait for the precious crop from the ground, and be patient with it, until it gets the early and the late rains. You must have patience too; you must keep up your courage, for the coming of the Lord is close at hand. . . . The judge is standing right at the door!"

Mark wrote against the dark background of the Neronian persecution. Among his readers were those whose patience was threadbare and whose courage was exhausted. He attempts an answer to the question, "How long . . . ?" by insisting (13:10) that "before the end the good news must be preached to all the heathen." By this means, he uses the problem as a challenge to patient service. Similarly, he employs the parable of the Fruit-bearing Earth to sustain the faith of missionaries and to relate their work to the purposes of God. Outward signs of success are few, but confidence is warranted. God is the decisive factor in his world, and though there is a period of waiting the coming of the Kingdom is assured.

The parable is not a systematic exposition of the Kingdom idea but throws light simply on one aspect of it. It is that the Kingdom will come by God's action, and men may wait in confidence for the divine initiative. Men are to place their effort and their lives at the disposal of God, and when they do this resources and forces not their own and beyond their control come into play. The ease of mind of the farmer, when he has

committed seed to the earth, rests on the justifiable confidence that forces resident in the soil will do what lies beyond his own power.

The banishment of anxiety by simple trust is the point in the experience of the farmer to which the Kingdom is comparable. The farmer lives normally and at ease. He has not been idle, but there are limits beyond which he cannot go. When those limits are reached, he rests in the confidence that other forces become active and bring human effort to fruition. The emphasis of the parable is not on progressive development. The Kingdom does not grow, and men do not build it. Men may meet the conditions of entrance to the Kingdom and may even move God to act in advance of original plans, but in the last analysis God alone brings the Kingdom in. It is this ultimate reliance on God that the parable teaches.

The symbolism of the "harvest" is a natural phase of the imagery of the parable, although verse 29 could be omitted without loss of effectiveness. Its natural sense is that of Joel 3:12,13:

> "Let the nations rouse themselves and come up
> To the valley of Jehoshaphat;
> For there I will sit to judge
> All the nations from every side.
> Put in the sickle,
> For the harvest is ripe!
> Go in, tread;
> For the wine-press is full!
> The vats overflow!
> For their wickedness is great."

This picture of the Judgment as a "harvest" is followed (vss. 14-21) by a graphic picture of a golden age, a sort of Kingdom of God.

An apocalyptic Day of Judgment was a usual feature of Jewish eschatology, and as such it was part of the inherited framework of the thought of Jesus and of most of the New Testament writers. It may have been less emphasized by Jesus than the evangelists represent, but their representation was based on fact.

There were those among Jesus' immediate contemporaries who exaggerated the importance of what men must do to bring God's will to pass (cf. Jos. Antiq. XVIII,i,1; Matt. 11:12,13; Luke 16:16). Without minimizing the meaning and importance of human effort, Jesus qualified it by recognizing its limitations. What he himself was able to do was not futile, but it was not the whole story. It was preparatory; and even as the farmer committed seed to the ground and waited confidently for nature to do its part, so Jesus trusted God to bring the Kingdom to pass. The issue was neither doubtful nor problematical for him, even though it depended on the operation of invisible and unobservable forces. He could wait in the joyous and well warranted confidence that God would triumph.

THE MUSTARD SEED

MATTHEW 13:31,32

Another figure which he used in speaking to them was this: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the largest of plants and grows into a tree, so that the wild birds come and roost in its branches."

MARK 4:30-32

"How can we find any comparison," he said, "for the reign of God, or what figure can we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown in the ground, though it is the smallest of all the seeds in the world, yet once sown, comes up and grows to be the largest of all the plants, and produces branches so large that the wild birds can roost under the shelter of it."

LUKE 13:18,19

He said, therefore, "What is the Kingdom of God like, and to what can I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that a man took and dropped in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the wild birds roosted on its branches."

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED IS PAIRED WITH that of the Leaven in Matthew and Luke, and with that of the Fruit-bearing Earth in Mark. In Mark and Luke, Jesus looks about for a simile for the Kingdom, an introductory device lacking in Matthew. In Luke, a man plants a seed of mustard in his garden; in Matthew, in his field. Mark does not mention the man, but only the seed, which, when sown, grows into an exceedingly large plant whose branches afford shelter for the birds. In Matthew and Luke the seed grows into a tree, a detail that evidently reflects the influence of Ezekiel 17:22,23 and 31:2-6. The agreements and differences noted are best explained on the hypothesis that the parable was preserved in Q, where it was paired with that of the Leaven, and in Mark. Luke followed the Q source whereas Matthew, as was his custom in such instances, made a combination of Mark and Q.

For the three evangelists, the parable is employed to illustrate an aspect of Christian missions. In Mark and

Matthew, the primary emphasis is on the smallness of the seed, the lesson for their readers being that insignificant beginnings are not necessarily an embarrassment. Paul had written the Roman church (Rom. 1:16) that he was not "ashamed of the good news," the reason being that he knew it not in terms of humble origin and unimposing equipment but as "God's power for the salvation of everyone who has faith." Mark and Matthew similarly estimate Christianity in terms of vitality rather than external proportions. Missionaries are encouraged for their labor by the assurance that the cause to which they give themselves has God's blessing and will eventuate in the Kingdom. Luke does not have the detail of the "smallness" of the seed, his emphasis being on the shelter afforded the birds by the tree. He finds the genius of Christianity in its universalism and in the spiritual hospitality it extends to men of all nations.

The mustard seed is explicitly used in the Gospels (Matt. 17:20; Luke 17: 6) as a symbol of smallness. The usage is in agreement with that of the Talmud and of the present parable in its Markan and Matthaean versions. The statement that "it is the smallest of all the seeds in the world" may not be scientifically exact, but that is beside the point. So far as the imagery of the parable is concerned, popular conception is decisive. None of the other qualities of mustard should be mentioned as involved in the meaning of the parable; the smallness of the seed is the single point of emphasis.

Neither the amazing proportions reached in the spread of the doctrine of the Kingdom nor the conception of the Kingdom itself as developing are involved in the teaching of the parable. The whole point of the contrast is the almost imperceptible seed and the astonishingly large plant or tree. The Kingdom comes but

it does not grow, and its coming is the outgrowth of the will of God rather than the effort of man. It does not exist in the Christian Community, but is wholly an eschatological conception.

The imagery of the birds being sheltered in the branches of the tree is akin to the prophetic conception (Ezek. 17:22f.; 31:2-6) of a universalistic Kingdom. The idea of the evangelists of the extension of Christianity to the Gentiles might well have grown out of Jesus' own aspiration that Israel's destiny and glory was to share its heritage with the nations.

For Jesus and his first hearers, this parable would express the conviction that his ministry was related to an immeasurably great outcome. Futility can never characterize effort that is put forth in God's name and in obedience to the divine will. Obscurity in the eyes of the world may be the pathway to the truest accomplishment. God himself is at work, and his sovereign will is destined to prevail. Jesus lived in the confidence that the activity of God would give meaning to his own effort and would bring out of it results that surpassed all immediate appearances.

THE LEAVEN

MATTHEW 13:33
Another figure which he used with them was this: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and buried in a bushel of flour until it had all risen."

LUKE 13:20,21
And he went on, "To what can I compare the Kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and hid in a bushel of flour, till it all rose."

EXCEPT FOR THE INTRODUCTORY FORMULAE, WHERE Matthew uses a declarative statement and Luke a rhetorical question, the two versions of the parable of the Leaven are practically identical. Matthew characteristically has "Kingdom of Heaven" and Luke, "Kingdom of God."

The omission of the parable by Mark may be explained in either of two ways. Mark deliberately discarded it because it duplicated the emphasis of the context already sufficiently made by other materials. More probably, the parable was preserved in Q, where it was paired with that of the Mustard Seed. This source was known to the authors of Matthew and Luke but not to the author of Mark, who, accordingly, did not use it because he did not know it.

From the very outset, the selection and adaptation of materials operated in the creation of accounts of the life and message of Jesus. The evangelistic and educational interests of Christian leaders were governing principles. The parable of the Leaven owed its preservation to the meaning it assumed for the evangelists. For them, it was prophecy of the phenomenal growth of the Church and of the assured spread of the Gospel throughout the world. It served to encourage and assure an outcome which the visible and immediate environment brought into serious question. Its appeal

lay in its suggestion of inscrutability and divine mystery (cf. John 3:8), rather than in the distinctly modern idea of growth through gradual permeation. By means beyond the observation and control of men, a glorious result was assured.

The making of bread, including the grinding of the grain (cf. Matt. 24:41; Luke 17:35), was woman's work. The quantity of flour specified in the parable ("a bushel") seems extraordinary and all sorts of allegorical meanings were inferred from it by such ancient interpreters as Augustine and Theodore of Mopsuestia. It seems to have been the usual quantity used, however (cf. Gen. 18:6; Judges 6: 19; I Sam. 1:24), and it has only that meaning in the parable.

Other occurrences of the term "leaven" or "yeast" in the New Testament are Galatians 5:9; I Corinthians 5:6-8; and the parallel passages Matthew 16:6,11,12; Mark 8:15; and Luke 12:21. In these instances, the connotation is of evil. Only in the instance of this parable is yeast used in the New Testament in the sense of something good, although instances are cited of its use in this sense in Rabbinic writings. The fundamental idea in the parable is that of Galatians 5:9, "A little yeast will make all the dough rise."

It is an abandonment of sound principles of interpretation to identify the "yeast" with the Christian Community or with a growing Kingdom of God. When the Kingdom is likened to "yeast," there is no thought of describing the nature of the Kingdom itself or of making the analogy carry meaning at every point. The single point is that the Kingdom will prevail, that there will be no rival sovereignty, that the existing world order in its entirety will pass, and that a radically new order will appear. The "yeast" affects the whole measure of flour, and the Kingdom will affect the whole

world. The process of change is not illustrated in this parable. Other parables do treat of the process of change, and where they do it is made clear that Jesus thought of the Kingdom as coming suddenly and by divine miracle. Where there is apparent reference to the Kingdom in terms of a slow unfolding of resident potentialities, the real emphasis is elsewhere, and as in the case of the Mustard Seed really emphasizes a transition from the small to the great. Paul's thought in I Corinthians 15:37ff. sheds light on the parable as here interpreted. The analogy is essentially the same, and the eschatology is true to type: "The very seed you sow never comes to life without dying first: and when you sow it, it has not the form it is going to have, but is a naked kernel . . . and God gives it just such a form as he pleases. . . . We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised free from decay, and we shall all be changed."

The leavening process is thus not the point of the parable. Rather the result of the process is the point. The dough in its whole mass is a new creation, and this is true regardless of quantity. Similarly, the victory of the Kingdom will be decisive and complete. However bad the world may appear and however set against God and goodness, the existing order is transient and a world order that adequately expresses the divine mind will take its place. For Jesus, and essentially for the evangelists, it is the altered aspect of the whole quantity of dough that furnishes the only point of comparison for the Kingdom.

EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

MATTHEW 13:36-43

Then he left the crowds and went into his house. And his disciples came up to him and said,

"Explain to us the figure of the weeds in the field."

He answered,

"The sower who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed is the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the wicked. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. So just as the weeds are gathered up and burned, this is what will happen at the close of the age; the Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather up out of his kingdom all the causes of sin and the wrong-doers and throw them into the blazing furnace; there they will wail and grind their teeth. Then the upright will shine out like the sun, in their Father's kingdom. Let him who has ears listen!"

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES IN MATTHEW (13:24-30) takes the place of the Fruit-bearing Earth in Mark (4:26-29). Then follows the parable of the Mustard Seed in all three Gospels (Matt. 13:31,32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18,19). Matthew and Luke, in independence of Mark, then introduce the parable of the Leaven (Matt. 13:33; Luke 13: 20,21), and then Matthew presents the Explanation of the Tares.

Instead of giving another parable following that of the Mustard Seed, Mark (4:33,34) says that "with many such figures he told them the message, as far as they were able to receive it," and that "he said nothing to them except in figures." Then, in accordance with his representation of the nature of parables, he adds that "in private he explained everything to his own disciples."

Probably taking his suggestion from Mark's mention of the "private" explanation of parables to the disciples, Matthew has the disciples request an explanation of the parable of the Tares after he had "left the crowds" and gone "into his house."

Matthew has been developing the theme of the phenomenal growth of the Church and the assured future of the Christian movement. The Explanation of the Tares carries the development of this theme forward by its specific identification of the "field" as "the world." It is, of course, the Mediterranean world that he has in mind, and it reflects the evangelist's awareness of the extensiveness of Christian missions in his day. He desires to say that the triumph of Christianity in "the world" is not made less certain by the undeniable presence of unworthy members and even teachers. This is rather accounted for by the clear distinction drawn between the kingdom of the Son of Man (vs. 41) and the "Father's kingdom" (vs. 43).

The evangelist appears to have worked through the parable in great detail and used its materials for his own purposes. The emphasis of the Explanation is on the meaning of the details. It represents thoroughgoing allegory.

The use of the title "Son of Man" presents difficulties. It is definitely messianic and is used in that sense in the Explanation. Yet the confession of Peter is represented as coming later (Matt. 16:16), which can only mean that if it were possible to attribute the statement to Jesus it would have to be located at a later point in the story. To the evangelist, however, the messiahship of Jesus is a starting point, and so he is able to violate the probable historical sequence without embarrassment.

The "seed" are given a twofold meaning. In the one instance, they are people who have become Christians. In the other, they are the message about the Kingdom.

HIDDEN TREASURE

MATTHEW 13:44
"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a hoard of money, buried in a field, which a man found, and buried again. And he was overjoyed, and went and sold everything he had and bought the field."

THE HIDDEN TREASURE IS THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF three short parables found in Matthew only (13:44-50). The most probable explanation of the fact that Matthew alone presents these materials is that they were found in his M source, and so were not known to the other evangelists.

The author of the first Gospel has a deep concern for the Church. He has constantly referred to its phenomenal growth and to the assured future of the Christian movement. His confidence takes full account of the problems that threaten success; and in the Explanation of the parable of the Tares, which immediately precedes the present parable, he takes account of the presence within the Christian Community of unworthy members and teachers. It is possible that there is a continuation of his general theme of the Church in the three parables of Matthew 13:44-50 and that in the parable of Hidden Treasure he equates the "field" and the Church. It is, of course, allegory to make such an identification, but the evangelist has employed allegory in other instances. It may be that here he thinks of the Church as the agency through which divine blessings, especially a personal possession of Christ, are mediated. He may desire to urge membership in the Church as a means of being "in Christ" and of being judged fit for admission to the future Kingdom when it appears.

The imagery of the parable is drawn from ancient practice. The protection of wealth by burying it in the ground was a sort of ancient equivalent for the

modern safety deposit box. In describing the looting of Jerusalem, Josephus (Wars VII,v,2) says, "Yet was there no small quantity of the riches that had been in the city still found among its ruins, a great deal of which the Romans dug up . . . I mean the gold and silver, and the rest of that most precious furniture which the Jews had, and which the owners had treasured up under ground, against the uncertain fortunes of war." Other allusions to the practice are found in Jeremiah 41:8; Job 3:21; Proverbs 2:4; Matthew 25:25.

The hiding of the treasure after its discovery is, of course, a piece of sharp practice. It belongs to a purely "worldly" wisdom and violates the morality of the Kingdom about as radically as could be imagined. The morality of the finder of the treasure is, however, not a part of the teaching of the parable. It has the kind of place in the parable that the alteration of contracts has in the parable of the Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:6, 7) and that calloused inhumanity has in the parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8). The point of comparison is found in the readiness in purely worldly practice to sacrifice lesser for greater values. He who would enter the Kingdom must, in view of its inestimable value, be ready to make extreme sacrifices.

Unexpectedness, similarly, is a part of the framework of the parable and not a part of its teaching point. Much has been made of the fact that here the discovery of treasure comes as a surprise, whereas in the parable of the Pearl of Great Price it is the sequel of persistent search. The two parables are thus made a sort of discourse on the varieties of religious experience. This is distinctly a modernizing tendency, and, however true psychologically, is fallacious exegetically. The one point of proper emphasis is the readiness to sell all else

that one has as a means of possessing that whose value is inclusive and supreme.

As employed by Jesus, the theme of the parable must have been the enormous worth of the Kingdom. This, rather than the meaning of the Kingdom in all its aspects, was the teaching point. It is in view of its paramount value that the conditions for Kingdom citizenship are so high and that the arduous effort involved in entrance is justified. The spirit of the parable corresponds to that of Mark 9:43-48 (cf. Mark 8:36f.; Matt. 7:13f.; Luke 14:25-35), "If your hand makes you fall, cut it off. . . . If your foot makes you fall, cut it off. . . . And if your eye makes you fall, tear it out. You might better get into the Kingdom of God with only one eye than be thrown with both your eyes into the pit, where the worm that feeds upon them never dies and the fire is never put out."

The Kingdom itself is always a social concept. It is never an inner experience of the individual. It is an order of life into which individuals who are eligible will enter when at some future time God inaugurates the New Age. The conditions of admission into this new order are, however, definitely personal. The Beatitudes are an enumeration of qualities of life that God approves in and requires of the individual who would enter the Kingdom. It is of tremendous importance that persons make their own those attributes in which the righteousness of the Kingdom consists, for only so can they enter the Kingdom when it comes. A man's overwhelming determination to enter the Kingdom and his view of the Kingdom as exceeding in worth all else that life contains is the emphasis of this parable.

The "deceitfulness of riches" (Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19) consists in the tendency of "wealth" to confuse a man's sense of values. A man so deceived may conclude

that life consists in an "abundance of things." Running through Jesus' teaching as a whole, and specifically emphasized here, is an insistence on the importance of developing an ability to discriminate between primary and secondary, between personal and materialistic, between transient and eternal. So here, as between "all that he had" and a man's entrance into the Kingdom, there is no warrant for hesitancy or debate. A wise man will joyously relinquish the former in view of the surpassing and incalculable value of the latter.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

MATTHEW 13:45,46

"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a dealer in search of fine pearls. He found one costly pearl, and went and sold everything he had, and bought it."

THIS PARABLE BELONGS TO THE SAME IMMEDIATE CONTEXT and serves in the exposition of the same general theme as the parable of Hidden Treasure. Its imagery is similarly drawn from the common life of the times.

Pearls are not mentioned in the Old Testament; but the use of precious stones as symbols of high value, especially spiritual value, was familiar usage (cf. Job 28:15-19; Prov. 3:13,15; 8:11). In the New Testament, pearls are a favorite symbol of value (cf. Matt. 7:6; I Tim. 2:9; Rev. 18:11; 21:19ff.).

The chief actor in the parable is a trader. He is no more an ideal character than the finder of the treasure in the preceding parable. He is, rather, a discriminating speculator, eager for a profit on his investment, and untroubled about moral scruples in getting possession of what he desires from its owner. He may well have been a typical member of a caravan that transported merchandise from the interior to western centers of commerce. He is willing to invest his total capital in a single pearl because he believes there is handsome profit in so doing.

There is no intended emphasis in the parable on the discovery of the pearl as the result of intensive search. The truth that religious experience is highly varied does not require to be illustrated by this parable in order to be valid. The point about the Kingdom that is illustrated in the present figure is simply the merchant's readiness to part with "all his possessions" as a means of possessing this exceedingly precious pearl.

Similarly, the figure of "buying" has no special meaning. It requires no reconciliation with the idea of God's grace. It is merely a detail in the framework of the parable, and as such requires no interpretation.

The adjective used to describe the pearl that is purchased has the connotation of superlativeness. There can be no pearl exceeding this one in value. There are no others of its character. It is possible that there is a contrast between the many pearls sought and traded in and the "one" of exceeding beauty and excellence finally secured, although in making the purchase it is not merely all the pearls he had but "all his possessions" that he disposed of in order to make the trade.

The thought of Jesus in this parable, as in that of the Hidden Treasure, was that entrance into the Kingdom brings life to its fulfilment and most meaningful fruition. Nothing else mattered. The eagerness of the merchant, his readiness to part with all he possessed, the settled determination to have the precious gem are graphic touches in a picture whose single purport was the inestimable worth of the Kingdom. The comment of Montefiore is true to this understanding of the parable and of Jesus' teaching as a whole, "There is to be no compromise; no half measures will serve our turn. The great end demands and deserves our complete self-surrender. To gain the great prize we must give our all. But the all is infinitely less than the prize. It is this urgency and abandon, this intensity and absoluteness, which constitute in large measure the newness and originality, as also the appealingness and driving force in the teaching of Jesus." [1]

[1] C. G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels* [2] (London: Macmillan, 1927), II, 213.

THE DRAGNET

MATTHEW 13:47-50

"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a net that was let down into the sea, and inclosed fish of all kinds. When it was full, they dragged it up on the beach, and sat down and sorted the good fish into baskets and threw the bad away. That is what will happen at the close of the age. The angels will go out and remove the wicked from among the upright, and throw them into the blazing furnace. There they will wail and grind their teeth."

IT IS POSSIBLE TO REGARD THE ORIGINAL PARABLE AS CONtained in verses 47 and 48, with verses 49 and 50 as a later addition embodying the evangelist's interpretation of the parable. Rather clearly, the Christian community with its miscellaneous membership is vividly present in his mind. The expectation of the end is there also, but much of the atmosphere of imminence that is so characteristic of Jesus' own thinking about the Kingdom is missing. The problem confronting the evangelist is that of dealing properly and helpfully with backsliding church members and with Christians who represent widely varying levels of achievement. He does this by following the assertion of the inestimable worth of the Kingdom in the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price with the parable of the Dragnet, and interpreting it to warn of an eventual separation of the unworthy from the worthy on the Day of Judgment. The application of the parable in verses 49 and 50 is almost a verbatim repetition of the similar material in the interpretation of the parable of the Tares, where it fits the imagery of the parable much better (cf. vss 40*b*-42).

In the thinking of the evangelist, the "net" may represent the Church. Jesus, himself, would not think of the Church at all in the sense of a religious institution that would develop as a result of his message and work. His thought was regularly of the Kingdom, soon

to come, but nevertheless definitely future. In the original parable, then, the Kingdom would be like a "net," not at every point, but in the single aspect involved in the analogy, namely: The advent of the Kingdom is prefaced by a Day of Judgment when the good and the bad, not merely in the membership of the Church but universally, will be judged before God and when eternal destinies will be assigned. It is this detail of the Judgment, the separation of the good and the bad, that appears to be the point. There is no thought on the part of Jesus or the evangelist of the Kingdom itself as present in an imperfect form. That would involve an overworking of the analogy of the "net." The analogy applies only at the point of the certainty of a Day of Judgment as preliminary to the advent of the Kingdom.

In the actual story, they who cast the net into the sea also separate the worthless from the good fish on the shore. In the application of the story in verses 49 and 50, however, the angels do the separating and may even be conceived as casting the net also.

If the parable is in any sense regarded as belonging to Jesus, it may have been a part of his instruction to disciples as "fishers of men." It would serve to emphasize an interest in reaching people of every description, counting none as privileged or unworthy, and leaving distinctions to be determined by the omniscience of God. Certainly, Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom drew the multitudes, and as certainly he expected a Divine Judgment where men would be judged and their destinies determined by the criteria of the Kingdom. At that time the real issues would be faced, the estimates of worldly wisdom would be upset, perfect justice would be done, and eternal destinies assigned.

TREASURES NEW AND OLD

MATTHEW 13:51,52

"Do you understand all this?"
They said to him,
"Yes."
He said to them,
"Then remember that every scribe who has become a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven must be like a householder who can supply from his storeroom new things as well as old."

THE QUESTION OF VERSE 51 AND THE INTRODUCTORY formula of verse 52 relate the parable to its context and disclose the evangelist's understanding of its meaning. "Do you understand all this?" and the affirmative answer of the disciples may have looked in either of two directions. The reference could be to an understanding of the parables contained in the entire thirteenth chapter. So taken, the "wherefore" or "then" of verse 52 would be an exhortation to the Christian leader to employ similarly wise methods of teaching. The reference may just as well be simply to the series of three parables of verses 44-50, in this event constituting a challenge to Christian leadership to adapt their message to the varying needs of a membership that is quite miscellaneous both in moral standards and in levels of spiritual achievement.

The evangelist has described the growth of the Christian movement, asserted his confidence in the assured outcome of Christian effort, magnified the incalculable worth of the Kingdom, and in thoroughly realistic and statesmanly fashion taken into account the difficulties involved in the widely varying types both of members and teachers who compose the Christian group. In the present parable, he thinks definitely of the Christian leader. What kind of man and what kind of message will meet the needs of the Christian community as constituted? His plea is for a full and varied message. He

is anxious to avoid onesidedness. He is confident that there are elements of helpfulness for people of all sorts in the Christian message, and he takes it to be the task of the leader to discover and minister to the needs of the group that he actually confronts.

The imagery of the parable is that of a household well supplied with food and clothing to fit a wide variety of taste. The head of the household, either the owner or the steward, is able and glad to provide what his guests need and in terms of their varying tastes. Some will like one thing and others another, but all are satisfied. The requirements of the guests are the primary concern of the host.

The emphases of this imagery are the ample character of the resources of the household and the generous readiness of the person in charge to dispense them on a basis of discriminating respect for the individuality and even the idiosyncrasies of the guests.

The things "new" and "old" may be variously interpreted:

1) The "old" may be the facts of nature and of human life which are the materials out of which the parables are constructed. The "new" would then be the spiritual insights and meanings which the materials illustrate in the parables. If the present parable is taken as a conclusion for the entire series of chapter 13, this understanding gains force.

2) The "old" may refer to the meanings implicit in Old Testament prophecy as looking forward to the Gospel. The Gospel itself would be the "new," and the fulfilment of prophecy.

3) A third possibility is that the "old" may be the permanently valid and valuable elements in the teaching of Moses and the prophets, and the "new" the teaching of Jesus regarding the Kingdom and its righteous-

ness. Thus, Jesus' religion would be made up of "old" and "new" and the two would complement each other as in Matthew 5:17.

4) The terms may describe stages of growth in the development of the Christian. To an earlier stock of ideas and experiences "new" ones are constantly being added, with the result that he can minister to others in their varying stages of development. This understanding would agree conveniently with the implications of the parable of the Dragnet which immediately precedes.

In the context of Jesus' life, the parable may have been a conciliatory approach on his part to the officially sanctioned leadership of the Jewish Church. He might have urged that a scribe who accepted his message, instead of losing what he already had, would find himself enriched. "Newness" would not be the equivalent of novelty, but rather a superior discrimination between primary and secondary, verified insights as against purely traditional and dogmatic positions, religion socially applied rather than merely theoretically held, the newness of religion as pushed to its furthest and fullest implications as against religion in an elemental and inadequate form. This would involve for Jesus a very real reverence for the "old" and a profound sympathy for those who knew only the "old," but without being throttled or coerced or intimidated by it or restrained within its limited circle.

Jesus made no conscious break with the Old Testament and with the religious life of his people. He rather thought of the essential aspects of that faith as fundamentally his own. He did not look at the past uncritically, however; and like the greatest of the prophets he felt free, and even impelled, to use his heritage creatively.

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

MATTHEW 18:21-35

Then Peter came to him and said,

"Master, how many times am I to forgive my brother when he wrongs me? Seven times over?"

Jesus said to him,

"Not seven times over, I tell you, but seventy-seven times over! For this reason the Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king, who resolved to settle accounts with his slaves. And when he set about doing so, a man was brought in who owed him ten million dollars. And as he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all he had, in payment of the debt. So the slave threw himself down before him and implored him, 'Give me time, and I will pay you all of it.' And his master's heart was touched, and he let the slave go and cancelled the debt. But when the slave went out he met a fellow-slave of his who owed him twenty dollars, and he caught him by the throat and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow-slave threw himself down before him, and begged him, 'Give me time, and I will pay you.' But he refused and went and had him put in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went to their master and reported the whole matter to him. Then his master called him in and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I cancelled all that debt of yours when you entreated me. Ought you not to have taken pity on your fellow-slave, as I did on you?' So his master in his anger handed him over to the jailers, until he should pay all he owed him. That is what my heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not each forgive your brothers from your hearts!"

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS, AS REPRESENTED BOTH IN JESUS' immediate followers and in the members of the missionary churches, were humble folk. Christianity made its most effective appeal to the dispossessed and the outcast, the forgotten men of the first century. Paul's statement to the Corinthians (I Cor. 1:26-29) is to this effect:

"Not many of you were what men call wise, not many of you were influential, not many were of high birth. But it was what the world calls foolish that God chose to put the wise to shame with, and it was what the world calls weak that God chose to shame its strength with, and it was what the world calls low and insignificant and unreal that God

chose to nullify its realities, so that in his presence no human being might have anything to boast of. But you are his children. . . ."

By an insistence that every life, whatever its circumstances or level of development, was infinitely precious to God, Christianity introduced a new and revolutionary principle into the life of its world. By an emphasis on this aspect of Jesus' original message, missionaries like our evangelist found an eager hearing among the "common people," even as Jesus had done.

The evangelist's theme in the the eighteenth chapter of Matthew is stated in the question of verse 1, "Who is really greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" His selection and arrangement of materials are designed to show that the criteria of the Kingdom are radically different from and superior to those that are customary in the "world." A little child, one sheep lost from a flock of a hundred, a debtor who owed only twenty dollars or one five-hundred-thousandth of the debt of a petty provincial tyrant-ruler—serve as illustrations of how God sees profound meaning and value in "what the world calls low and insignificant and unreal."

The discourse on forgiveness which the evangelist brings into this context serves his general theme well and is a part of his answer to the question, "Who is really greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" He is great who is gracious to the lowly, who sets the same store by the things that affect the wellbeing of a humble man as by those of a provincial ruler, who estimates a man's affairs less in terms of amount than in terms of happiness and self-respect, who has no exaggerated sense of self-importance that minimizes the inherent dignity and worth of other persons.

The parable of the Unmerciful Servant brings the

discussion of forgiveness to its climax. Its imagery serves also to emphasize the larger message of the chapter as a whole. It does not appear in Luke, although Luke does have (17:4) the saying about unlimited forgiveness. Interestingly, Luke does not mention Peter. Matthew, who regularly gives Peter pre-eminence (cf. 10:2; 14:28-31; 15:15; 16:17,18,22; 17:4,24-27; 18:21), makes him the spokesman as a means of giving added force to his message.

Peter's question in verse 21 refers back to the statement of verse 15, "But if your brother wrongs you, go to him and show him his fault while you are alone with him. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother." There may also be an allusion to the principles of unlimited revenge as stated in the Song of Lamech (Gen. 4:24):

> "Lamech said to his wives,
> Adah and Zillah, hear my voice,
> You wives of Lamech, give ear to my words;
> I kill a man for wounding me,
> And a boy for striking me.
> If Cain is to be avenged sevenfold,
> Then Lamech seventy and sevenfold!"

Traditionally, "three times" was the proper limit of forgiveness for God and man (cf. Amos 1:3,6,9; Job 33:29). Forgiveness was thus a sort of moral parole rather than a cancellation of the past in the interest of a new beginning. Past wrongs were, so to speak, laid on the table to be called up again and a cumulative penalty inflicted in the event of a fresh lapse. By contrast, the action of the king in the parable is characterized by extreme generosity. The debtor asks for patience: "Give me time, and I will pay you all of it." But the king cancels the debt outright, yet with the

tacit expectation that the beneficiary of such graciousness will himself exemplify it.

The amount of the larger debt is ten thousand talents, or about ten million dollars. Only the ruler of a rich province involved in a serious tax deficit could owe such an amount to his sovereign. According to Josephus (Ant. xvii,xi,4) the total paid in taxes by Judea, Idumea, Samaria, Galilee and Perea was only eight hundred talents for a year, or one twelfth of the figure in the parable. Even the sale of the very persons of the debtor and his family would not discharge such an obligation. The intent is evidently to describe an unpayable debt.

By contrast, the smaller debt was only some twenty dollars, or one five-hundred-thousandth of the larger amount. The request of the second debtor is almost identical with that of the other: "Give me time, and I will pay you." But the request is met not only by refusal but with brutality and imprisonment. The mercy accorded him has created acquisitiveness rather than generosity on the part of the larger debtor, perhaps because what he might collect now would be his own to use as he pleased instead of being applied to reduce his indebtedness.

The refusal to forgive as he had been forgiven is warrant for the characterization, "You wicked slave!" a phrase used in other instances (Matt. 25:26; Luke 19:22) to describe the betrayal of a trust. The unforgiving man in the present instance is false to a trust. His vindictiveness and inhumanity toward a helpless man bring his king's graciousness into disrepute, with the result that the king adopts a legal in place of a forgiving attitude toward him. Only in the presence of inhumanity does the king's "wrath" appear.

The object of forgiveness, here as elsewhere in New

Testament teaching, is to give a man a thoroughly new opportunity and divert attention from the past to the present and future. It is designed to effect a change of heart as the foundation of actual righteousness. Understood in any other sense, it loses its moral meaning and becomes essentially immoral. The forgiven man in the parable has understood the king's graciousness in terms of privilege and self-importance, and he is accordingly regarded as deserving the full legal penalty for his obligations.

In verse 35, the details of verse 34 are given eschatological meaning. They are made to refer to the eternal punishment of the wicked and of the demonic allies of the Devil in hell. The conceptions belong to the world view of primitive Christianity, and in general to Jesus' own outlook on the future (cf. Matt. 8:29; 25:41; Mark 9:43,47f.; Rev. 14:10,11; 18:7,10,15; 20:10).

The theme and the method of its treatment are the evangelist's own. The original materials and the essential emphases, in a context that can only be imagined, belonged to Jesus. Forgiveness, whether of much or little, would have a qualitative meaning for Jesus and would express the fraternity inspired by God's fatherliness. Because of the value of persons to God, no man should hold another in contempt. Only an axaggerated sense of self-importance could create contemptuousness. Egoism might be congenial and legitimate by the tests of worldly criteria, but it could never be anything other than alien by the standards of the Kingdom, where "if anyone wishes to be first, he must be the last of all and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

LUKE 10:25-37

Then an expert in the Law got up to test him and said,
"Master, what must I do to make sure of eternal life?"
Jesus said to him,
"What does the Law say? How does it read?"
He answered,
"'You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole soul, your whole strength, and your whole mind,' and 'your neighbor as you do yourself.'"
Jesus said to him,
"You are right. Do that, and you will live."
But he, wishing to justify his question, said,
"And who is my neighbor?"
Jesus replied,
"A man was on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers, and they stripped him and beat him and went off leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be going that way, and when he saw him, he went by on the other side of the road. And a Levite also came to the place, and when he saw him, he went by on the other side. But a Samaritan who was traveling that way came upon him, and when he saw him he pitied him, and he went up to him and dressed his wounds with oil and wine and bound them up. And he put him on his own mule and brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out a dollar and gave it to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend I will refund to you on my way back.' Which of these three do you think proved himself a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?"
He said,
"The man who took pity on him."
Jesus said to him,
"Go and do so yourself!"

LUKE'S STORY OF THE "EXPERT IN THE LAW" WHO DESIRED to know how he could "make sure of eternal life" is probably a variant version of the scribe who asked (Mark 12:28), "Which is the first of all the commands?" There are a number of instances in which the third evangelist seems to have had Mark and a non-Markan source peculiar to himself before him and to have preferred the latter in his choice of materials. This non-Markan source, known as L, in the present instance probably furnished the story which Luke makes the setting for the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The parable may have had no such setting in the context of Jesus' ministry as is indicated in Luke. It does not appear in Matthew or Mark. Luke may have found it in the sequence in which he presents it in his L source, or he may have provided the setting himself in the exposition of his own message.

The parable in its Lukan setting seems to represent a subtle attack on the part of the evangelist on the leadership of Judaism. There would be abundant motivation for such an apologetic emphasis, if it is true that Luke is defending Christianity in a persecution situation in which Jewish leadership had ranged itself with the enemies of the Christian community and in which Christianity and Judaism were rivals in their missionary programs.

According to Luke, Jesus has the lawyer answer his own question and then commends the answer as essentially "right." But the lawyer himself is dissatisfied, and his dissatisfaction furnishes Jesus with the occasion for an exposition of the the lawyer's answer through the parable. The lawyer has apparently only a very limited insight into the implications of his own answer, and by comparison with Christian leadership stands condemned on much the same grounds as that other "leader among the Jews," Nicodemus, who though "the teacher of Israel" was "yet ignorant" of things clearly grasped as elemental by Christians.

In Matthew (22:35) as in Luke (vs. 25) the motive of the questioner is "to test him." The note is absent in Mark, but in Matthew it is one of a series of sinister efforts to entrap Jesus. It was probably Luke's intention so to represent official Judaism and by this means discredit it.

Similarly, Jesus' reference to the Law in his reply, was for the evangelist a sort of satire on Jewish legalism.

By contrast, the Christian position is stated in the summary of the commandments and illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Wholeheartedness takes the place of an "atomistic" view of service to God. The whole life is involved in devotion to God. Jesus views the Law as embodying a deep and pervasive principle which the lawyer has not discovered. The present imperative of the verbs of verses 28 and 37 gives emphasis to the conception of religious activity not as a series of things to be done but as a unifying, continuous, unflagging, consistent principle that suffuses all of life. No situation is omitted; no relationship is regarded as secular.

The lawyer's desire "to justify his question" (vs. 29) apparently represents an effort to clear himself of the appearance of being simple in asking a question so simply answered. He knew the sum and substance of righteousness, but the nub of the matter was not so much in the theory as in its concrete application. He represents himself as having asked about a real problem without having got a satisfactory answer. His question is less one of general principle than of specific definition and application, and his problem is sharply defined only in the further question, "Who is my neighbor?" Whether he had in mind an insistence on the definition of "neighbor" associated with scribal Judaism is uncertain, although from the evangelist's viewpoint he presumably did. The point is that by raising the question he insists that Jesus' answer has been too simple and that his problem therefore remains.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is employed to show that the very question illustrates complete confusion on the lawyer's part. For the Christian, it is less a matter of, "Who is my neighbor?" than "Whose neighbor am I?" The man who gives aid rather than

the man who is assisted is a "neighbor" in Christian definition. Brotherliness rather than proximity is the decisive factor.

The Samaritan as an actor in the story would serve Luke's evangelistic purpose admirably. A non-Jew as the embodiment of true religion would both contribute to the polemical interests of the evangelist and at the same time make his message more interesting and intelligible to his Gentile public. It is entirely likely that the original series was priest, Levite, Israelite rather than priest, Levite, Samaritan, the contrast in that instance being the official religionist versus the layman. The point would be that the ordinary layman may serve God with more reality than the man who operates the ecclesiastical machinery of religion, religion itself being less a matter of mechanics than of personal relationships. For the message to be couched in the framework of Jewish life and for it to have had such an emphasis is highly probable for Jesus himself. Luke, dealing with a situation in which Christianity had become largely Gentile would find it advantageous to replace "Israelite" with "Samaritan."

It is to be remembered, however, that there were representatives of Judaism who interpreted religion in distinctly universalitic terms and who deliberately minimized the racialism that was all too dominant. Jonah, Ruth, Second Isaiah illustrate this trend in the Old Testament. It is not inconceivable that in this same tradition, Jesus originally used the Samaritan as an actor in the story. He may have set Jew over against Samaritan as a means of making dramatic the insistence that spirit rather than race is decisive with God.

Whether the Samaritan was originally in the parable or not, the satire on official Judaism remains the same. The priest, and presumably the Levite, are described

as traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. Their institutional duties lay behind rather than ahead of them. They had no reason for hurry. At the same time, their recent activity as religious officials has had no carry-over in terms of good will and active helpfulness. The ordinary layman, or, as the case may be, the Samaritan, is described as "on a journey." He is in the midst of an undertaking rather than at its end, so that his deed involves loss of time and an interruption of business in hand in addition to the dangers of a robber-infested highway.

The situation to which the evangelist addressed his message was different from that with which Jesus dealt. His selection and arrangement of materials was his own. It is none the less true, however, that the essential emphases he made agree fundamentally with Jesus' own presentation of religion. At the same time, the materials he employed, edited and arranged, to be sure, to fit the evangelist's purposes, owed their origin to Jesus.

For Jesus himself the parable would certainly have meant that neighborliness was a matter of responsiveness to need rather than proximity or office. The wayside deed, whether by Jewish layman or Samaritan, would reflect an atmosphere in which men are one as sons of God. Opportunity for expression is ever the concern of love, and conventional barriers never effectively restrict its operation. The highway as well as the Church provides a normal setting for religious service. Privilege, office, worldly circumstance have little relevancy in the judgment of God. However described, whether consciously religious or not, God's estimate of human life takes its start from the moral and spiritual facts. God's judgments are "just" in the sense that they wholly accord with the realities.

The parable represents Jesus reliably, also, in the

obligation it places on the religious man actively to do the right and appropriate thing under all circumstances. A neighbor is the man who actively expresses love rather than the man in need of assistance. So far as geography goes, three men were "neighbor" to the victim by the roadside, but only one acted the part, and with Jesus action was determinative and definitive.

THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT

LUKE 11:5-13

And he said to them,

"Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him in the middle of the night, and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has just come to my house after a journey, and I have nothing for him to eat,' and he answers from inside, 'Do not bother me; the door is now fastened, and my children and I have gone to bed; I cannot get up and give you any.' I tell you, even if he will not get up and give him some because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rouse himself and give him all he needs. So I tell you, ask, and what you ask will be given you. Search, and you will find what you search for. Knock, and the door will open to you. For it is always the one who asks who receives, and the one who searches who finds, and the one who knocks to whom the door opens. Which of you fathers, if his son asks him for a fish will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? So if you, bad as you are, know enough to give your children what is good. how much more surely will your Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him for it!"

THIS PARABLE OCCURS IN LUKE ONLY. ITS CHRONOLOGICAL setting is entirely vague, other than that it belongs to the period of the journey through Perea to Jerusalem. It constitutes part of the context which describes the giving and import of the "Lord's Prayer," and it illustrates the evangelist's conviction of the effectiveness of perseverance in prayer.

There are no references to this model of Christian prayer in the letters of Paul or in Mark's gospel. This probably indicates that prior to A.D. 70 the prayer had not become a familiar feature of Christian services of worship, at least in the areas which these earlier writings represented. The prominence given the prayer in Matthew and Luke suggests the development of such liturgical usage.

In Matthew the prayer serves as an illustration in the section of the Sermon on the Mount (6:5-15) dealing with prayer, which is itself the major portion of a discussion of Christian worship (6:1-18). The chronological setting in Matthew belongs to the early part of

Jesus' ministry in Galilee. The suggestion that Jesus gave the prayer twice is highly improbable.

The immediately succeeding context in Luke (vss. 9-13) is paralleled almost verbatim in Matthew (7:7-11). There are two important differences, however, between the sections as employed by the evangelists. In Matthew, the teaching neither belongs to the section of the Sermon on the Mount in which prayer is the theme nor does it deal with prayer, whereas in Luke, dissociated entirely from the Sermon on the Mount, its function is to make explicit the teaching of the parable of the Friend at Midnight. Furthermore, where Matthew has, "How much more surely will your Father in heaven give what is good to those who ask him for it!" Luke has, "How much more surely will your Father in heaven give *the holy spirit* to those who ask for it!"

The naturalness of the connection in Luke 11 between verses 5-8 and 9-13 may mean that he drew the materials from his Q source, which suggests that Matthew knew the parable and rejected it. It is entirely possible that Matthew felt the danger of misunderstanding in this and other such parables as the Unjust Judge and the Unjust Steward, and that he sensed too great a contrast with the simple and confident picture of prayer that he preferred (cf. 6:7,8).

Each of the evangelists, in his own way, made prayer a prominent feature in his presentation of Christianity. Luke treats it as a characteristic expression of the personal religion of Jesus and an indispensable resource for every follower of Jesus (cf. 1:10; 2:37; 3:21; 6:12; 9:18; 22:32; 23:34). In Luke 5:33 a contrast is drawn between the devotional life of followers of John the Baptist and Christians: "John's disciples observe fasts and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but your disciples eat and drink." In the present con-

text (Luke 11), the disciples themselves are made to sense this contrast and ask for a form of prayer that would be their own. The "whenever" of verse 2 probably indicates that the evangelist's immediate concern was with prayer as employed in a service of common worship.

The message intended by the evangelist appears in the sequence of thought in the entire section (11:1-13): (1) the setting and content of the "Lord's Prayer (vss. 1-4); (2) the parable of the Friend at Midnight (vss. 5-8); (3) the effectiveness of perseverance in prayer (vss. 9-13). Friendship pervades the atmosphere of Christian prayer. The apparent audacity of the faith of Christians arises out of their assumption of God's friendliness. Divine grace immeasurably surpasses the imperfections of human friendship, but the latter nevertheless furnishes an analogy for the perfect generosity of God.

The evangelist is certain that all prayer reaches God and is fraught with blessing. He is hardly thinking of the restrictions and exceptions necessarily involved in foolish petition, nor of the activity of God as bound by a suppliant's wish. It is the Holy Spirit that is unfailingly given. The special interest in the Spirit that appears in the book of Acts is as definitely present in Luke's gospel (cf. 1:15,35,41,67; 2:25,27; 3:22; 4:1,14, 18; 10:21; 11:13). Like Paul (cf. Gal. 5:22ff.; I Cor. 12-14; Rom. 12:6; etc.), the evangelist regards the Spirit as including the totality of all divine blessings and as their dynamic intermediary. He thinks of Christian prayer as centering in the earnest petition for the Spirit, and of God's readiness to bestow this supreme blessing there could be no doubt. Presumably, as with Paul (cf. Rom. 8:26-28), even prayers not specifically so framed

would be interpreted by God to mean a desire for this chief of all gifts.

Perseverance in prayer is hardly intended to represent God as needing to be persuaded or as responding to importunity. It rather has to do with the demonstration of the suppliant's earnestness and of his openness to the coming of the Spirit. It is to be understood as representing a conception of devotional life such as is pictured of the Apostolic group in their preparation for the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1: 14; 2:2), where "they were all devoting themselves with one mind to prayer."

The picture drawn in the parable is a very natural one, though it involves difficulties as an analogy for prayer. Travel by night served to avoid the heat of the daytime. The late arrival at a destination and the inconveniences to which a host would be put were disadvantages of such travel. The shut door symbolized the ending of the work of the day and was a warning against needless intrusion. In humble homes, all members of the family slept on the floor in a row, the children in the middle and a parent at either end. For the father to answer the door and then disturb the mother, as he would need to do to meet the need pictured in the story, would disturb the entire household. The man at the door would know all of this and hence had to be persistent to get his wish. He would probably put his neighbor to such trouble only because of his sense of obligation to be hospitable, and the neighbor would respond only in the hope that for the remainder of the night the household would be left undisturbed.

The spirit of the man who knocked at the door was the point of the parable for the evangelist. If he had in mind a comparison of any sort between the irritated householder and God, it would have its basis in dis-

similarity: that is, if persistence could get results against odds such as the story involved, the Christian could come to God in prayer with complete confidence.

The probabilities are that in the context of Jesus' own ministry this parable had nothing to do with prayer. It may rather have illustrated the imperative claims of social duty, complementing in a way the emphasis of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The duty of hospitality was a sacred one (cf. Mark 6:7-11; Matt. 10:5-42; Luke 9:2-5; 10:1-16; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; I Peter 4:9; I Tim. 5:10; etc.), and its exaltation as a Christian virtue must have contributed materially to the success of early Christian missions.[1]

Jesus urged hospitality on the basis of the essential sacredness of elemental human needs, and for that reason made it an aspect of man's duty to God. For the sake of such an obligation, the importunity of the man in the parable could be justified as it could not have been if it expressed self-interest. There were occasions when Jesus himself appeared brusque and even inconsiderate. Always, however, he had in view the conservation of values that mattered more to other people than the values that had to be sacrificed.

[1] Donald W. Riddle, "Early Christian Hospitality: A Factor in the Gospel Transmission," *Journal of Biblical Literature,* LVII (1938), 141-154.

THE EMPTY HOUSE

MATTHEW 12:43-45

"When a foul spirit goes out of a man, it roams through deserts in search of rest and can find none. Then it says, 'I will go back to my house that I left,' and it goes and finds it unoccupied, cleaned, and all in order. Then it goes and gets seven other spirits, more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there, and in the end the man is worse off than he was before."

LUKE 11:24-26

"When a foul spirit goes out of a man it roams through deserts in search of rest, and when it finds none, it says, 'I will go back to my house that I left.' And it goes and finds it unoccupied, cleaned, and all in order. Then it goes and gets seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there, and in the end the man is worse off than he was before."

THE PARABLE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE IS FOUND IN MATthew and Luke, where it functions as part of their more extensive treatment of the theme of Mark 3:22-30. The subject with which the three evangelists are dealing is the meaning of Jesus' authority over demons. Matthew and Luke both give the substance of the content of Mark 3:22-30 and supplement it with illustrative materials drawn from other sources. Matthew has previously given a story of the healing of "a dumb man with a demon" (9:32-34), and he here introduces his parallel for Mark 3:22-30 with a story of the casting out of a demon from a man who was "blind and deaf." In Luke, the story is of the driving out of a demon from a "dumb man."

Jesus' effectiveness in bringing relief to demon-possessed lives is represented as having aroused criticism. He is accused of being in alliance with "the prince of the demons." The accusation is made, according to Matthew, by "the Pharisees," according to Mark, by "the Scribes who had come down from Jerusalem," and according to Luke, by "some of them" (the people). Mark gives no hint of how Jesus became acquainted with

the charge against him, but Matthew and Luke say that "he knew what they were thinking." Then follows the refutation of their false inferences in the short parables of the "Divided Kingdom" and the "Divided House," and the true account of Jesus' behavior in the parable of the "Strong Man's House" (Matt. 12:25-26,29; Mark 3:24-26,27; Luke 11:17-18,21). At this point, Mark introduces the teaching about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (3:28-29; cf. Matt. 12:27-28,31-32; Luke 11:19-20; 12:10) and with it closes his treatment. Matthew and Luke pursue their treatment of the theme with the parable of the Empty House.

The two versions of the parable are in practically verbatim agreement. The few minor differences require no comment. Matthew's use of the parable comes later in the discourse of which it is a part than is the case in Luke, which suggests that both evangelists distributed their materials with complete freedom (cf. Matt. 12:33 and Luke 6:43-45). Luke introduces the parable of the Empty House (vss. 24-26) at the point where Matthew (12:31-32) follows Mark (3:28).

The key to the meaning of the parable for Matthew is found in verse 45, for which Luke has no parallel: "That is the way it will be with this present wicked age." Matthew wrote shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and he interpreted that event as the beginning of a time of tribulation because the Jews had rejected Jesus. Christianity was rapidly becoming an entirely Gentile movement, and the evangelist appears to be thinking of the terrible destiny ahead for the group among whom Jesus spent his earthly ministry and won many followers, but where his following gradually dwindled and by the evangelist's time had all but disappeared. The point for Matthew is of a piece with his thought in 23:35-36: "This is why I am

going to send you prophets, wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify . . . it is that on your heads may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth from the blood of Abel the upright . . . I tell you, all this will come upon this age!" There follows in Matthew (vss. 37-38) the great lament over Jerusalem. Luke's parallels for these materials occur in widely separated contexts and are very differently applied.

With Luke, the parable has a definitely personal emphasis. He makes it follow the parable of the Strong Man's House, and he connects the two parables with the observation of verse 23 (cf. Matt. 12:30), "Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not join me in gathering, scatters." The basis of wholehearted allegiance to Jesus, which is the mark of Christian discipleship, is the possession of the Holy Spirit. This emphasis goes back to Luke's discussion of prayer (11:1-13), the supreme function of which is the preparation for God's gift of the Spirit. Luke would say here that he alone is strong in whom dwells the Spirit.

The parable treats of a man repossessed by a demon, who for some reason, either because exorcised or of his own accord, had gone out of him. There is nothing figurative in the conception of demon-possession employed in the parable; it is as factual as are the other materials from common life from which the parables are constructed.

Demons were thought of as ordinarily preferring to inhabit normal human bodies. Rather than experience complete disembodiment, however, they would consent to enter the bodies of animals, as in the case of the demons driven out of the demoniac of Gadara (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39). The reason that demons abhorred disembodiment was that it afforded

no "rest" (Matt. 12:43; Luke 11:24); that is, they would know no cessation of wandering and no release from the discontent that attended their homelessness.

Spirits without bodies were thought of as haunting desert places or devastated cities (cf. Isa. 13:21; 34:14; Lev. 16:10; Bar. 4:35; Tob. 8:3). The author of the Apocalypse of John comforts the persecuted Church by representing Rome as destined to become the dwelling place of demons (18:2): "She is fallen! Mighty Babylon is fallen! She has become the haunt of demons, and a dungeon for every foul spirit and every unclean and loathsome bird. . . ." Wild beasts along with demons infested such places. It was in the "desert" and "among the wild animals" that Satan "tried to tempt" Jesus.

Ordinarily, a demon might leave and return to the body of a possessed life as a man would his dwelling. The demon in the parable seems to have gone out voluntarily, for he continues to speak of "my house that I left." The unaccustomed cleanness and order as well as the emptiness of his "house" seem to have made the return of the demon doubly inviting, presumably, because there was now more opportunity to produce chaos and ruin.

The demon that originally possessed the man, after revisiting the house he had left, "goes and gets seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there." Their abode there is now permanent, and their number, as with Mary of Magdala (Luke 8:2), suggests that their domination is complete (cf. Micah 5:5; Eccles. 11:2).

"And in the end the man," now fully possessed by demons, is said to be "worse off than he was before." This is the judgment with which both accounts close the description. It is a picture of complete abandonment

to evil as the sequel to the negligence of sacred opportunity, whether by the Jewish nation as in the case of Matthew (cf. vs. 45, "That is the way it will be with this present wicked age") or by the individual, as in the case of Luke, who through failure to be persevering in prayer is insufficiently fortified by the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life. Such a picture of the demon-possessed as abandoned by God is drawn in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Test. Napht. 8:6; cf. Rom. 1:24-32):

"But him that doeth not that which is good,
Both angels and men shall curse,
And God shall be dishonored among the Gentiles through him,
And the devil shall make him as his own peculiar instrument,
And every wild beast shall master him,
And the Lord shall hate him."

The author of II Peter (2:20) makes a statement about the "backsliding" Christian that may shed light for the interpretation of the evangelists' thought in the present instance: "For if after men have escaped the corrupting influences of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they again become entangled in them and are overcome by them, *their final condition is worse than their former one*" (cf. John 5:14). The problem of "backsliding" was a crucial one for the early Christian movement, especially in time of persecution or when the popular expectation of the early return of Jesus as Messiah proved disappointing. Christian leaders usually tried to meet the problem, in part at least, by picturing the condition of the "backslider" as dangerous and even hopeless.

A classical illustration of the problem and of the

rigorous treatment of it is found Hebrews (6:4-8) : "For *it is impossible to arouse people to a fresh repentance* when they have once for all come into the light and had a taste of the gift from heaven, and shared in the holy Spirit and felt the goodness of the word of God and the strong influences of the coming age, and yet have fallen back, for they crucify the Son of God on their own account, and hold him up to contempt. Ground that drinks in frequent showers and produces vegetation that is of use to those for whom it is cultivated receives God's blessing. But if it yields thorns and thistles, it is thought worthless and almost cursed, and it will finally be burned" (cf. Heb. 10:26-39) .

At baptism, the Christian convert was thought of as purified and as being filled with the Spirit (cf. Acts 19:2-6) . Many were convinced that this experience could come but once and that lapse into sin left no room for repentance. The general influence of this view was a consideration that led to infant baptism on the one hand and to the deferment of baptism as late as possible on the other. Constantine consented to be baptized only on his deathbed, although he had been a professed Christian for thirty years. It had an indirect influence, also, on the development of the devices of "confession" and "absolution," whereby good people who in critical times had denied their faith could return to the fold of the Church.

Always the representation of the state of the "backslider" as desperate was intended as a challenge. The author of Hebrews closes his terrible warning (10:39) with the note of confident optimism: "But we will not draw back and perish, but we will have faith and save our souls" (cf. 6:9) . The thought of the proverbial statement with which Matthew and Luke close the parable has this kind of background and probably in-

dicates that the parable had a similar function for them.

For Jesus, the emphasis of the parable centered about a wholehearted devotion to God and to the righteousness of the Kingdom. A positive committal to and a consuming zeal for the will of God were the basic meaning of religion for him. This commitment, however, was always more than mere resolution and aspiration. It involved a sort of invasion or seizure by the Spirit. A sense of God's nearness and guidance stimulated faith and created energy for service. In some such sense as was true of the greatest of the prophets, though with profounder richness and continuity, Jesus apparently felt God was working through him. It was thus a thoroughly sound instinct on the part of the leadership of the early Church that exalted the function of the Spirit in the life of the individual and of the Christian community.

In part, at least, as a result of his understanding of religion in terms of vital intercourse between man and God, Jesus interpreted righteousness in positive, nonlegal, creative terms. It developed in the marketplace rather than in the desert. It belonged to the garden and the open field rather than the hothouse. Instead of requiring protection from contamination, it was itself a purifying, energy-creating factor. Withdrawal from the world in the interest of remaining "unspotted" by it completely missed the point. Demons were defiling, but the Spirit of God was their master, and men might themselves share this mastery of the Spirit. A house that is "unoccupied, cleaned, and all in order" requires a divine occupant if it is to be adequately fortified and serviceable.

Jesus never advocated neutrality. He felt that the dangers of a neutral conception of righteousness were the dangers of illusion. "Anyone who is not with me

is against me, and anyone who does not join me in gathering, scatters" (Luke 11:23; Matt. 12:30). The idea is that failure to be militant for the right invariably becomes a form of opposition to it. It is sooner or later partizanship in the interest of the less desirable of the possible alternatives.

THE RICH FOOL

LUKE 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to him,
"Master, tell my brother to give me my share of our inheritance."
But he said to him,
"Who made me a judge or arbitrator of your affairs?"
And he said to them,
"Take care! You must be on your guard against any form of greed, for a man's life does not belong to him, no matter how rich he is."
And he told them this story:
"A certain rich man's lands yielded heavily. And he said to himself, 'What am I going to do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do; I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and in them I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have great wealth stored up for years to come. Now take your ease; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself."' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul will be demanded of you. Then who will have all you have prepared?' That is the way with the man who lays up money for himself, and is not rich with God."

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF LUKE IS A COMPLETE UNIT of thought in the evangelist's message. The general theme of the section is "Godliness" as contrasted with "worldliness." The author has developed this theme by assembling materials from many sources and settings, as is evident from the widely varying contexts in which these materials occur in the other Gospels: verse 1*a* is the evangelist's own setting for the discourse; verse 1*b* is paralleled in Matthew 16:6 and Mark 8:15; verses 2-8 in Matthew 10:26-32; verse 9 in Matthew 10:33 and Mark 8:38; verse 10 in Matthew 12:32 and Mark 3:29; verse 12 in Matthew 10:19,20 and Mark 13:11; verses 13-21 give the setting and content of the parable of the Rich Fool and are evidently drawn from Luke's L source as they have no parallels in the other Gospels; verses 22-34, which deal with God's care, are material that Matthew presented as part of the Sermon on the Mount (6:25-33,19-21); and finally a long section on watchfulness in verses 35-59 has scattered parallels in Matthew 24:43-51; 10:34-36; 16:2,3; 5:25,26.

It is Luke's custom to assemble teaching materials around life situations. For the present discourse as a whole, the situation is pictured in verse 1, "As the people gathered in thousands, until they actually trod on one another, he proceeded to say to his disciples first of all. . . ." Then (vss. 13-15), breaking into the teaching situation, "Someone in the crowd said to him, Master, tell my brother to give me my share of our inheritance." The intruder's case furnished the occasion for the parable of the Rich Fool very much as the lawyer's questions in 10:25-30 served to call forth the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The meaning of the parable for the evangelist is apparent from the context in which he employs it. He regards material possessions as hardly worth the struggle their acquisition requires because of their transiency. By the time a man amasses wealth, he must relinquish it. Furthermore, the possession of wealth exaggerates man's natural sense of self-importance to a degree that seriously confuses his spiritual insight. He loses sight of his dependence on God for the very continuance of life and substitutes the indulgences of a purely earthly existence for those ends and values that God has made the objects of man's existence. Because he places his reliance in material possessions he never knows the peace that Christian faith produces; but his life is filled with "anxiety" and restlessness, and he never even enjoys the leisure and comfort that he has promised himself. The only truly "rich" man is he who "rich with God," who makes for himself "purses that will never wear out, inexhaustible riches in heaven, where thieves cannot get near nor moths destroy."

In addition to this distinctly religious meaning of the parable, Luke also saw in it a basis for defending Christianity against the increasing suspicion and hostility of

the Roman government. Always in times of confusion and national calamity there is an effort to fix responsibility on some helpless minority group and by visiting penalty on it divert popular attention from real issues. Trends that came to full expression in the persecution by Domitian were visible when Luke-Acts was written, and made it at least a subsidiary purpose of the author throughout his two volume work to show that Christianity was not hostile to the state and did not advocate social revolution. It would appear that the Evangelist in this instance regards Jesus as having drawn a hard and fast line between "secular" and "sacred" when he answered the man (vs. 14), "Who made me a judge or arbitrator of your affairs?" For the troubled times in which the evangelist's readers lived, this understanding of Jesus would serve as a counsel of caution against involvements, which could only bring trouble and after all were relatively unimportant.

The incident that serves to introduce the parable has the appearance of authenticity. It was a thoroughly natural procedure to carry a dispute to a rabbi. The Old Testament was more than a source book of moral and religious instruction; it was a code of civil and criminal law as well. The Jewish theory of government was theocratic, and the Old Testament embodied God's will for the whole of man's life. The scribes taught religion, but they also furnished Jewish society with its entire professional leadership. Insofar as the administration of civil affairs was in Jewish hands, the scribes administered them. The local rabbi might be a combination of preacher, schoolteacher, and magistrate. A property dispute would not be a purely secular matter, but a matter in whose settlement religious considerations should enter.

Nothing in the account specifically describes the

claimant's plea as just or unjust. It may well have been entirely just. The demand for a directed verdict certainly indicates that the man himself felt that a fair appraisal of the facts would show that he had been unfairly treated. The justice of the case is not the issue that is brought to the front in the discussion, however, although a principle is proposed that no settlement of the problem could afford to ignore.

Luke probably understood the question of verse 14 as a disavowal of interest on the part of Jesus in such matters: "Who made me a judge or arbitrator of your affairs?" (cf. 20:25). He may have intended to contrast Jesus with Moses and thereby divert suspicion from Christianity to Judaism in the contemporary scene. The question has the sound of a reminiscence of the contemptuous question put to Moses by a fellow-countryman (Exod. 2:11-14), "Who made you a ruler and judge over us?" (cf. Epictetus I,xv,1-5). It is as probable, however, that the intention was not to disavow interest but rather to insist on the autonomy of the conscience of the individual. Jesus wanted the man's action to be his own, an expression of preference and not of blind obedience to authority. Therefore, although refusing to decide the matter in *ex cathedra* fashion, he does give invaluable assistance in the principle suggested in the parable.

The man came with a complaint against his brother. In verse 15 it is suggested that in dealing properly with his brother he will need first to examine himself: "Take care! You must be on your guard against any form of greed, for a man's life does not belong to him, no matter how rich he is"; or, as Moffatt translates it, "A man's life is not part of his possessions because he has ample wealth." The latter rendering suggests the idea that man's true life lies outside the realm of mere material-

ism. More probably the thought is that wealth does not guarantee the continuance of life. The rich man dies like the poor man, and in death the two are made equal. The security that wealth appears to bring is deceptive and life itself is in the keeping of God, who gave it and who will judge it without reference to its material circumstances. The thought is akin to that of the psalmist (49:16-20):

"Fear not when a man gets rich,
When the splendor of his house increases;
For he will take nothing with him when he dies;
His splendor will not go down after him.
For he would count himself fortunate with bare life,
And would congratulate you because things are going well with you,
Because you come up to the generation of his fathers,
While he will never more see light."

The parable illustrates the issue that Jesus is represented as raising doubly well in that it casts no reflection on the methods by which the Rich Man accumulated his wealth. "A certain rich man's lands yielded heavily"; that is how he came to be rich. But the parable turns upon the effect of the possession of wealth on the man's character. Nothing could bring this out more clearly than the prominence of the possessive pronoun: "My barns," "my grain," "my goods," "my soul." He appears in the same unfavorable light as the "very prosperous" Nabal in the story of I Samuel 25, who, when David asked for assistance, replied, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many slaves today who connivingly break away, each from his master! Should I then take *my* bread and *my* water and *my* meat that I have slaughtered for *my* shearers, and give it to men of whom I know not whence they are?"

The "prosperous" Nabal and the Rich Man of the parable are devoid of humility. Everything centers in themselves. They conceive of themselves as the absolute owners of their wealth and as privileged to use it in ways that please themselves. They resemble, interestingly, in their conceptions of how life may be enjoyed. Abigail, who kept David from taking both wealth and life from Nabal, finds her husband "holding a drinking bout in his house, like the drinking bout of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk, so that she could not tell him anything at all until the morning light." Similarly, the Rich Man says to his soul: "Soul, you have great wealth stored up for years to come. Now take your ease; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself."

The Rich Man has a thoroughly materialistic view of life. He bases all hope of happiness on his accumulated wealth. The increase of his possessions means only the possibility of greater indulgence. Yet strangely, he defers the enjoyment of things money can buy in the expectation that by a still further increase of his wealth he may indulge himself with greater prodigality, with the result that he comes out the loser even in the present world order. Life ends with his purely worldly aims only partly realized. He is like the man described in Ecclesiasticus (11:18,19):

> "One man grows rich by carefulness and greed,
> And this will be his reward:
> When he says, 'Now I can rest,
> And enjoy my goods,'
> He does not know when the time will come
> When he will die and leave them to others."

The contrast between "years to come" and "this very night" (vs. 20) is emphatic. The Rich Man cannot

conceive of his control of the wealth he has accumulated as ever relaxing. The tangible has had such reality for him. It has never occurred to him that there were any plans other than his own plans, or that such plans as God might have could run counter to his own. He has forgotten, if he ever knew, that even material values depend on life and that life is from God. It is when God calls for the return of life to himself that the impermanence of stored crops, the emptiness of earthly ease, and the transiency of material wealth appear. Then the absolute sovereignty of God stands out as the only reality that should have been considered at all.

This man, accounted rich by the world, was actually a pauper when earthly life came to an end. He was "not rich with God," and so was not rich at all. The accumulation of wealth of a kind and with a zeal that obscured God's sovereignty turned out to be folly. In order to be "rich with God" this man needed to possess values such as God credits to a man's account because they are the values for which He stands and which He exalts.

Jesus never drew a hard line between secular and sacred. He agreed with the inherited view that the whole of a man's life mattered to God. Taking the present story as an actual occurrence, he could not have disowned interest in the man's problem. Instead, he told a story that bore directly on the problem and contributed to its proper solution. The likelihood is that with the rebuke of Moses in mind (Exod. 2:14), he proposed a more effective kind of remedy for human differences than Moses had discovered.

Jesus analyzed social situations in terms of the welfare of the persons affected by them. Insofar as he felt that human effort had meaning, he urged that each individual perform his duty as an act of co-operation with

God. Beyond all that men might do, he saw God actively exerting himself on behalf of righteousness. Jesus never thought of human effort as sufficient to save the world. God, not man, would inaugurate the Kingdom. Yet, he was insistent that men live as though the Kingdom had actually come, and thereby, by ways whose effectiveness remained a mystery and that might lead to a cross, bring nearer God's triumphant activity. By living in such fashion, men qualified themselves for admission to the Kingdom when it should please God to bring it to pass.

It is on this basis that he advised the man who brought the complaint against his brother, and it is this point that the parable illustrated in the context of Jesus' message. The man appeared ready to sacrifice brotherliness in order to get his share of wealth. Without minimizing the importance of justice in the case at hand, Jesus suggested that a real settlement would take into account not a single set of values but all conceivable values that were involved. It must center about the relevancy of the immediate issue to the larger ends of God. Jesus apparently felt that this man had made an entirely too "nearsighted" approach to his problem. He made no attempt to dictate a solution or to substitute his own conscience for the man's own. He rather attempted to clear the atmosphere and suggest a point of departure that would bring the two brothers together on the basis of their common duty to God.

The parable illustrates Jesus' characteristic attitude toward material things. Simplicity, for him, was closely related to spirituality. Preoccupation with the getting or enjoyment of wealth dulled the conscience and coarsened the spirit. He counted the elemental needs of food, clothing, and shelter sacred; and he saw no reason why any person should lack these in sufficient

abundance. Beyond legitimate provision for these needs, however, Jesus regarded the possession of wealth as exceedingly dangerous. The outcome for the Rich Man in the parable illustrated for Jesus the typical rather than the exceptional effect on character when men possess more than they need for themselves and than they have the wisdom and inclination to employ for ends that meet God's approval.

THE BARREN FIG TREE

LUKE 13:1-9

Just then some people came up to bring him word of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. And he answered.

"Do you think, because this happened to them, that these Galileans were worse sinners than any other Galileans? No, I tell you; unless you repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people at Siloam who were killed when the tower fell upon them—do you think they were worse offenders than all the other people who live in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; unless you repent, you will all perish as they did!"

He used this figure:

"A man had a fig tree growing in his garden, and he went to look for fruit on it, and could not find any. And he said to the gardener, 'Here I have come three years to look for fruit on this fig tree, without finding any. Cut it down. Why should it waste the ground?' He answered, 'Let it stand this one year more, sir, till I dig around it and manure it; perhaps it will bear fruit next year. But if it does not, you can have it cut down.' "

THE PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE IS FOUND IN Luke only. The other Synoptic writers, however, have as the preliminary to their account of the cleansing of the Temple the story of Jesus cursing a fig tree on which he had found nothing but leaves (Matt. 21:18,19; Mark 11:12-14). The parable and the story resemble in their common emphasis on the barrenness of the tree. The story creates a difficult moral problem of petulance on the part of Jesus, especially in view of Mark's statement (vs. 13) that "it was not the time for figs." This problem entirely disappears if the Markan story is regarded as having grown out of the parable. Luke had Mark's Gospel as one of his sources and seems to have formed some such judgment and to have preferred as more trustworthy the parable in his L source. Instead of prefacing his account of the cleansing of the Temple (19:45-48) with a story of wrath, Luke provides a setting of profound pathos (19:41-44):

"As he approached the city and saw it, he wept over it, and said,

" 'If you yourself only knew today the conditions of peace! But as it is, they are hidden from you. For a time is coming upon you when your enemies will throw up earthworks about you and surround you and shut you in on all sides, and they will throw you and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave one stone upon another within you because you did not know when God visited you!' "

It is further worthy of note that from Luke's account of the cleansing of the Temple the details of the violent upsetting of "the money-changers' tables and the pigeon-dealers' seats" are entirely absent.

The discourse of the twelfth chapter of Luke carries over into the first nine verses of the thirteenth chapter. Watchfulness in view of impending judgment is a prominent note in that discourse (cf. 12:43), and to it is now added an exhortation to repentance. Repentance as preparation for God's judgment is urged in the whole context (cf. 12:58,59; 13:4,5,9).

The parable serves a twofold function in the evangelist's message. It offers an opportunity to allay suspicion by showing that Christianity did not encourage an antagonistic attitude toward the Roman government. Jesus neither censured Pilate nor defended "the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices." Rather, he used the incident to illustrate a purely religious truth—man's general failure to meet the demands of God and his corresponding need of repentance. Pilate may even have been the human agent in the visitation of God's wrath. There may also be an indirect exoneration of Rome for the destruction of Jerusalem, so far as the evangelist is concerned,

in the allusion to "those eighteen people at Siloam who were killed when the tower fell upon them."

The exhortation to repentance is the major interest of the evangelist. He is not discussing the relation of sin and suffering. He may or may not have assumed that suffering is usually an evidence of sin. What he is saying is that those who suffered in the instances mentioned should serve as reminders to the living of their own unworthiness. The living should regard their having been spared as an evidence of divine grace. Instead of presuming on God's patience or speculating about his justice they ought to repent while life lasts and live as fruitfully as the immediately succeeding story (vss. 10-12) shows Jesus constantly did. The reasoning of Luke resembles that of Paul (Rom. 9:14-33; cf. Isa. 29:16; 45:8-10; 64:8; Jer. 18:6) when he brushes aside the suggestion that God is unjust and asks: "Then what if God, though he wanted to display his anger and show his power, has shown great patience toward the objects of his anger, already ripe for destruction, so as to show all the wealth of his glory in dealing with the objects of his mercy, whom he has prepared from the beginning to share his glory, including us whom he has called not only from among the Jews but from among heathen?" Luke addresses a ringing plea to his own contemporaries that they take life as a period of grace, that they see in its continuance a disclosure of God's patience, that they fulfill the accepted conditions of sharing "his glory."

Jesus' informants (vss. 1,2) were apparently new arrivals among the great multitude (cf. 12:1) listening to his message. Perhaps they had got something of what he had said about interpreting "this present time" and for one reason or another wanted to know the construction he would put on the story of Pilate's ruthlessness.

It is possible that they were trying to entrap Jesus into making a statement of severe condemnation of Pilate. They may, however, have been trying to protect him from such a possibility by suggesting that those massacred by Pilate were sinners who deserved their fate and that Pilate was merely God's agent in this visitation of his wrath.

There is no independent corroboration of the incidents used as illustrations, but they have the sound of historicity. The times were turbulent, and few Roman procurators in Judea lasted as long as Pilate. It was only thirty years after the close of Pilate's administration in A.D. 36 that the Jewish War began, and the spirit that reached such bitterness and fanatical desperation then was alive throughout Jesus' ministry. It was the habit of Pilate to deal ruthlessly with disorder (cf. Jos. Antiq. XVIII,iii,2; iv,1; Wars II,ix,4), and the dispatch with which he quelled the first evidences of discontent gave him a longer period in office than most governors of Judea enjoyed. The allusion in verse 1 was probably to an incident of this sort.

The second incident (vs. 4) refers to what the modern man would call an "accident." The conception of "accidental" in the modern sense, however, hardly existed for the contemporaries of Jesus or of Luke. There was divine or demonic causation behind most things that happened. For Luke this incident probably carried a reminder of the more recent fall of Jerusalem (cf. 19:41-44) with its terrible destruction of life.

The repeated threats of punishment (12:59; 13:4,5,9) are eschatological. They look forward to the Judgment of God which would follow the general resurrection and determine who should enter the Kingdom and who be excluded. The thought is identical with that embodied in the warning of John the Baptist as Luke

himself has recorded it (3:9): "But the axe is already lying at the roots of the trees. Any tree that fails to produce good fruit is going to be cut down and thrown into the fire."

The three years the tree had stood represented merely the reasonable period of time the owner would have to wait for fruit. The plea for "this one year more" when the gardener might "dig around it and manure it" reminds of Abraham's plea for the cities of the plain (Gen. 18:22-33). It is a prayer that penalty wait on further warning and an ample chance to repent. It carries with it the reminder, however, that God's patience has an end and that it is never to be taken as toleration of sin. "Wrath" will be God's final reaction against sin and against men who persist in sinning. But the immediate present is at man's disposal. Because man is incapable of dealing with his past, God forgives what lies there on the basis of a present repentance. Delay serves to make the present an accretion upon the past; and since man's hold on life is extremely uncertain, instant repentance is urged.

The imagery of the parable and its meaning for Jesus may have been suggested by Isaiah's "Song of the Vineyard" (5:1-7):

"Let me sing for my Loved One
  My love song of his vineyard.

My Loved One had a vineyard
  On a fertile hill;
He trenched it, and cleared it of stones,
  And planted it with choice vines;
He built a watchtower in the midst of it,
And hewed out a winevat;
And he looked for it to yield grapes,
  But it yielded wild grapes.

Now, O citizens of Jerusalem, and men of Judah,
Judge, I pray, between me and my vineyard!
What more could have been done for my vineyard
Than that which I have done for it?
Why, then, when I looked for it to yield grapes,
Did it yield wild grapes?

So now, I pray, let me tell you
What I will do to my vineyard:
I will remove its hedge, and it shall be ravaged;
I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled under foot;
I will make it a waste, unpruned and unhoed,
That shall spring up with briers and thorns;
And the clouds will I command
That they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah are his cherished plantation;
And he looked for justice, but lo! bloodshed,
For righteousness, but lo! a cry."

Jesus shared the prophet's certainty of God's judgment. This certainty was sharpened and intensified by the conviction Jesus had that this judgment was imminent. He fixed no dates, but he lived constantly in the thought that the present world order might end momentarily. On that Day, God would judge the world and would inaugurate a New Age. The apocalypticism of later Judaism furnished the framework of Jesus' thought, and into that framework he fitted the great certainties of his religious faith. He employed it to insist that God opposes sin and that guilt will not ultimately go unpunished. By means of it he pictured all privilege and opportunity as expressions of divine graciousness and warned against mistaking God's patience for laxness of moral requirement. With the ut-

most vigor at his command he made the imminence and certainty of Judgment an incentive to commence the living of the Kingdom's type of life in advance of the Kingdom's inauguration.

THE CHIEF SEATS

LUKE 14:7-11

He noticed that the guests picked out the best places, and he gave them this illustration:

"When someone invites you to a wedding supper, do not take the best place, for someone more distinguished than you are may have been invited, and your host will come and say to you 'Make room for this man,' and then you will proceed in confusion to take the poorest place. But when you are invited anywhere, go and take the poorest place, so that when your host comes in, he will say to you, 'My friend, come to a better place.' So you will be shown consideration before all the other guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the man who humbles himself will be exalted."

THE CONTENT OF THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER OF LUKE finds only a few scattered parallels in the other Gospels: Verses 3-5 in Mark 3:4 and Matthew 12:10,11; verse 11 in Matthew 23:12; verses 26,27 in Matthew 10:37,38; verses 34,35 in Mark 9:50*a* and Matthew 5:13*b*. This serves to illustrate what is increasingly clear, that each evangelist was an interpreter of the Christian message in his own right, and that he used the materials available to him with complete freedom. He saw in the needs of the people he sought to influence his surest guidance for presenting Jesus and his Gospel, and in this he was entirely true to the spirit of Jesus.

The public to whom the evangelists addressed their messages was largely a non-Jewish public. They could, therefore, without giving offense, caricature Jewish leadership. It is of distinct value to the modern Christian as he reads the gospels to realize that the Pharisees are there made to embody the undesirable qualities which the evangelists desired to rebuke in Christians. It is a homiletical rather than primarily a historical picture that they drew. To be sure, there were Pharisees who were self-sufficient, proud, contemptuous of the ordinary man, more sensitive to the commendation of men than of God; but these have ever been the defects

attending officiality and privilege. Jewish leadership never had a monopoly on these vices, and the leadership of the Church has never been wholly free from them.

Luke could hardly have found a more suggestive setting than the dinner table of a prominent Pharisee on the Sabbath day. A scrupulous legalism that so easily shaded into hypocrisy and that encouraged complacency and pride was readily associated with that setting and made it serve admirably for the discourse on "Humility" which is the evangelist's theme throughout the chapter. The deeds and words of Jesus illustrate the theme and show how real sensitiveness to the will of God reduces and even eliminates the usual tyranny of social convention. Luke understands Jesus accurately when he pictures the humble man, not as having a sense of inferiority based on worldly status, but as being awakened to God's reality and nearness. He stands in awe of God alone, and so has an entirely new basis for estimating precedence (vs. 11). Accustomed ways of classifying people are modified for the humble man, because he regards them in terms of their worth to God (vss. 12-14). Humility may be costly to a man who makes it a principle of behavior, even upsetting his most valued relationships (vss. 26-35), and it is with this emphasis on costliness that the discourse ends.

The parable of the Chief Seats is an illustration in this discourse. Many of the standard works on parables omit it from their list, presumably because it more nearly has the character of an exhortation than a narrative. It may be that Luke has blurred the narrative character of the original material in making it an exhortation instead of a simple illustration of humility. He has told his story in verses 1-6, and he uses the parable to enforce its implications. The connection

between the two is rather awkwardly made by the comment of verse 7.

It is likely verses 8-10 describe the proper etiquette at a banquet. Precedence based on rank and status is involved in the seating of the guests. The host is responsible in the matter and has the authority to require conformity. A spirit of self-assertivenes both on the part of the "social climber" and on the part of those who have socially "arrived" is the characteristic outcome in such situations. It is this eagerness for recognition, this determination to be treated as important, that is used by contrast to suggest the dignity and exaltation of Christian humility.

There may be a reminiscence of Proverbs 25:6,7 in verse 10:

> "Claim not honor in the presence of the king,
> Nor stand in the place of great men;
> It is better for you to be told, 'Come up hither!'
> Than to be humbled before the noble."

The purely prudential character of the instruction of the older passage, however, is not necessarily approved in the parable. The statement, "So that when your host comes in, he will say to you, 'My friend, come to a better place,' " may describe result. If purpose is involved it is in terms of a thoroughly worldly situation that is taken for granted but not approved in the parable.

The point of the parable for Luke is expressed in verse 11: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the man who humbles himself will be exalted." It is interesting to note the widespread use of this sentiment among early Christian leaders. The statement is repeated in almost this exact verbal form in Luke 18:14*b* and Matthew 23:12, and in substance

in James 4:10 and I Peter 5:6. The thought for Jesus and for these later followers is eschatological. It is at the final Judgment that men will be classified purely on a merit basis, and it is at the "heavenly banquet" that those who have devoted themselves to God's will receive a recognition that the world never gives.

Jesus recognized and respected the fact of difference in dealing with people. He lifted it out of the artificial setting and meaning that social conventions created, however, and made moral values its only legitimate foundation. Precedence in terms of character brings achievement within the reach of every individual, and the excellence of one creates no embarrassment or limitation for others. The "chief seats" are for the spiritually fit, and moral excellence never escapes the notice of God.

An act that is ostensibly religious but that has human approval rather than God's commendation as its real incentive is essentially hypocritical for Jesus. "That they may have glory of men" describes motivation that alienates God. God alone is the object of religious concern, and only he need see what the true worshiper does. The single motive that Jesus recognizes as worthy is "that you may show yourselves true sons of your Father in heaven." The prudential advice of the parable belongs to the framework of the story and not to the teaching either of Jesus or of Luke.

Jesus thought of religion as taking its rise from a profound self-knowledge that made a man see his dependence on God. It culminated in a glad recognition of God's absolute sovereignty and a fellowship between man and God which this recognition made possible. Humility was thus for Jesus a synonym for religiousness.

Submissiveness to human authority was no part of religion for Jesus. The humble man, owning only the

authority of God's will, might defy such authority. Moses is the ideally humble man of the Old Testament (Num. 12:3), and it was his humility that enabled him to defy the mightiest sovereign of his world and become the emancipator of Israel. Until God became supremely real to him, the will of the Egyptian ruler meant everything. It was religious devotion that made Moses a rebel against all authority except that of God. It was so with Jesus and has been historically true of men who through Jesus have entered deeply into a knowledge of God.

THE GREAT FEAST

LUKE 14:15-24

One of the other guests heard this, and said to him, "Blessed is the man who shall be at the banquet in the Kingdom of God." He said to him, "A man once gave a great dinner, and invited a large number to it, and when the dinner hour came, he sent around his slave, to say to those who were invited, 'Come! for it is now ready!' And they all immediately began to excuse themselves. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go and look at it. Please have me excused.' Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to examine them. Please have me excused.' Another said, 'I have married, and so I cannot come.' So the slave went back, and reported this to his master. Then the master of the house was angry and said to his slave, 'Hurry out into the streets and squares of the city, and bring the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame in here!' And the slave said, 'What you ordered, sir, has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the slave, 'Go out on the roads, and among the hedges, and make them come in, so that my house may be full. For I tell you that none of those men who were invited shall have any of my dinner!' "

MATTHEW 22:1-14

And Jesus spoke to them again in figures, and said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a king, who gave a wedding banquet for his son. And he sent his slaves to summon those who had been invited to the banquet, and they would not come. He sent other slaves a second time, and said to them, 'Tell those who have been asked, "Here I have my banquet all ready, my bullocks and fat cattle are killed, and everything is ready. Come to the banquent!" ' But they took no notice of it, and went off, one to his estate, and another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves, and ill treated them and killed them. This made the king angry, and he sent his troops and put those murderers to death and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The banquet is ready, but those who were invited have proved unworthy of it. So go out where the roads leave the city and invite everyone you find to the banquet.' So his slaves went out on the roads, and got together all the people they could find, good or bad, and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to view the guests, he saw among them a man who did not have on wedding clothes. And he said to him, 'My friend, how did you happen to come here without wedding clothes?' But he had nothing to say. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the darkness, there to weep and grind his teeth.'

"For many are invited but few chosen."

A COMPARISON OF LUKE'S PARABLE OF THE GREAT FEAST with the Matthaean story of the Wedding Banquet of the King's Son[1] (Matt. 22:1-14) suggests that they are

[1] A further discussion of this parable is found on page 212.

versions of the same original parable. There are a number of differences in detail that create the basis for a different view, and these differences deserve to be noted. The host in Luke is "a man" and in Matthew "a king." For both evangelists the story is somewhat of an allegory of the Messianic Banquet, though this is more clearly the case with Matthew than with Luke. In Matthew, there is no indication of how many guests were invited, whereas Luke specifies "a large number." Luke has a "slave" and Matthew "slaves" do the inviting. In Matthew, those first invited offered no excuses but simply "would not come." Matthew describes two invitations to the guests originally invited and then represents the hall as "filled with guests" after a single invitation to an entirely new group. In Luke there is only one call to the original group and two missions to new groups. The second invitation in Matthew is rather clearly a reminiscence of the similar detail in the parable of the Vineyard and the Husbandmen (21:36; cf. Prov. 9:2-3,5). The excuses are given in detail in Luke (vss. 18-20) and merely summarized in Matthew (vs. 5). Different historical events are apparently in the minds of the evangelists: with Luke the Gentile mission (vss. 22,23), with Matthew the destruction of Jerusalem (vss. 6,7) probably as a symbol of a definite abandonment of the Jews and a turning of Christian missionaries to the Gentiles (vs. 9). Luke's statement (vs. 24) that "none of those men who were invited" shall participate in the feast has no parallel in Matthew.

The differences of detail are superficial and are overbalanced by the fundamental points of resemblance. The contexts in which the versions are presented justify their separate treatment. Each evangelist is illustrating his own message, and the two uses of the story may serve to shed additional light on the meaning of the original.

Luke relates the parable to that of the Chief Seats (vss. 7-11) by the direct application he makes to his host (vss. 12-14) and by the confused inference which another guest drew from the application (vs. 15). The parable of the Great Feast is represented as addressed to this fellow guest, and has to do with admission to "the banquet in the Kingdom of God."

A very definite value which the parable had for Luke is suggested in his description of the people to whom the dinner invitation had an effective appeal. Those who responded to the invitation that others had declined were not people engrossed in their property interests. They were in the first instance "the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame" from "the streets and squares of the city," with still other persons gathered indiscriminately from "out on the roads, and among the hedges." They sound like the people designated at the outset of Jesus' ministry as the beneficiaries of his concern (Luke 4: 18,19):

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
For he has consecrated me to preach the good news to the poor,
He has sent me to announce to the prisoners their release and to the blind the recovery of their sight,
To set the down-trodden at liberty,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor!"

Luke's own sympathy with the unfortunate and the dispossessed caused him to accentuate the similar interest of Jesus. He almost goes the length of identifying those in humble earthly circumstances with those who are spiritually humble (cf. 6:20-26) and of despairing of the people who own the world's wealth. Those who thronged into the house of the host in the parable probably represented for the evangelist first of all the

dispossessed and neglected within Jewish society, of whom the recognized leaders despaired, and in the second instance the unreached and uncared for multitudes of the Gentile world who furnished the most responsive audiences for Christian missionaries in his own day.

These people who came are not merely substitutes for those who were originally preferred. It is as far afield of Luke's thought to press the imagery of the story too literally in this particular as it would be to take too unimaginatively Paul's explanation of the evangelization of the Gentiles in the eleventh chapter of Romans. The thought is rather of the readiness with which the unfortunate and despised accepted Jesus in contrast to the complacency and worldly superciliousness of the privileged.

For Luke, the parable was also a sort of authentication of Christian missions. The knowledge of the Gospel had reached him at the hands of a missionary, and he in turn was a Christian evangelist to a Gentile public. He saw the course that the development of the Christian movement had taken, and he assumed that it was definitely given this direction by Jesus (vss. 22,23). Those to whom the Gospel first came were hardly represented at all in the Church as he knew it (vs. 24).

Gentile Christians needed to be reminded, however, that the failure of their Jewish predecessors could be repeated in themselves. It may be that in his allusion to the irrevocable exclusion of those first invited (vs. 24) Luke employed the rigorous doctrine of the impossibility of a second repentance to keep his own audience spiritually alert. Paul found it necessary to reprove a nascent complacency in an earlier day (Rom. 11:19,20), and in the same spirit Luke pointed out the dangers of presumption.

Christian leaders are kept mindful also of the worthy succession in which they stand: the prophets, Jesus, the apostles, and now they themselves constitute a historical line of chosen messengers through whom God has kept alive his contact with men. Luke elsewhere (4:43; 9:2; 10:9; etc.), as here, dignifies the task of the missionary by representing it as a perpetuation of the ministry of Jesus.

The banquet was a familiar figure for picturing the future bliss of those whom God approves (cf. Isa. 25: 6; Zeph. 1:7; etc.). In Luke's version of the parable (vs. 15), one of Jesus' audience uses this imagery about "the banquet in the Kingdom of God." Jesus takes it and gives it a turn calculated to focus attention on obligation instead of privilege, while at the same time retaining the original associations of the figure. Participation in the Kingdom is joyous and releasing, but is reserved for those able to meet the spiritual qualifications for admission.

The sending of a reminder to invited guests (vs. 18) carried no suggestion of their known unwillingness to attend the dinner. It was the usual procedure (cf. Esther 5:8; 6:14). The omission of a second summons by the host would have been equivalent to the cancellation of the invitation. For guests to ignore the reminder was an insult to the host.

Luke's version of the parable presents an elaborate account of the excuses of the guests. The original invitation had, presumably, been accepted, and the expectation would be that the final summons would meet with unanimous and joyous response. Instead, there was unanimous refusal, creating the impression of a conspiracy to insult and ridicule the host. The excuses differ in detail, but they have a sort of common denominator in that they describe pre-occupation with interests

that are regarded as more worthwhile. These interests, under appropriate circumstances, were legitimate, which gives them an apparent plausibility. However, they are not of an urgent nature, and their citation has the effect of minimizing the importance of the invitation that is declined. It is the mark of "worldliness" thus to regard material interests to the neglect of the spiritual responsibilities that deserve precedence.

The anger of the "master of the house" (vs. 21) does not describe petulance. It rather indicates settled purpose. The host is determined that plans so well made shall not be frustrated. He does not meet discourtesy with supine resignation, but with prompt, decisive, remedial action. He addresses his invitation to new groups whose circumstances will make the "dinner" a more meaningful opportunity than for those who had never known dire want.

No further overtures are made to those who offered the excuses of inspecting land that had been purchased and of examining oxen and of establishing a home. The statement (vs. 24) that "none of those men who were invited shall have any of my dinner!" is probably the evangelist's way of stating the widely current doctrine of the impossibility of a second repentance (cf. Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-39; II Pet. 2:20).

An aspect of Jesus' personal religion and of his presentation of religion in his teaching was his thoroughly democratic interest in people. He was hopeful of those of whom others despaired. He insisted on evaluating men on the basis of potentiality rather than status. He was more deeply impressed by the direction of a man's aspirations than by the particular stage of achievement at the moment. As an expression of his service to God, he multiplied his contacts with men at all levels of development, and in these contacts he found

a broadened basis for faith in God. His disposition in this regard became a fundamental source of misunderstanding with the leaders of institutional religion. It excited their jealousy, and later their suspicion.

The present parable, if told by Jesus in the approximate form in which it has been preserved, must have been designed to meet the criticisms of his ministry among the outcast and despaired of multitudes. The parable is framed from the point of view of his critics as a means of caricaturing them by pointing out the greater readiness of those whom they despised to respond to religion interpreted in terms of their vital needs. The parable suggests that Jesus' critics are pessimistic about the wrong group.

Had the parable been framed from Jesus' own point of view, the host would have been represented at the outset as inviting the needy and neglected. There is a reminiscence of Luke's awareness of this (vs. 13) in the pointed counsel that Jesus is represented as having given his own host. Jesus' sympathy with the disadvantaged and exploited masses did not begin in the rejection of his message elsewhere but in his thoroughly sound judgment, repeatedly verified in history, that sweeping religious revival—and, one may add, social revolution—usually originates in the subsoil of society.

THE UNCOMPLETED TOWER
THE KING'S RASH WARFARE

LUKE 14:25-33

There were great crowds accompanying him, and once he turned and said to them,

"If anyone comes to me without hating his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and his very life too, he cannot be a disciple of mine. For no one who does not take up his own cross and come after me can be a disciple of mine. What man among you if he wishes to build a tower does not first sit down and estimate the cost of it, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Or else when he has laid his foundation and cannot finish the building, everyone who sees it will begin to ridicule him, and say, 'This man started to erect a building, and could not finish it!' Or what king, if he is going to meet another king in battle, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to meet the other who is coming against him with twenty thousand? And if he cannot, while the other is still far away, he sends envoys to him and asks on what terms he will make peace. In just that way, no one of you who does not say goodbye to all he has can be a disciple of mine."

THE TENTH CHAPTER OF MATTHEW IS A SORT OF MANUAL of directions for Christian missionaries. The setting which Luke uses (vss. 26,27) as a background for the parables of the Uncompleted Tower and the King's Rash Warfare is paralleled in Matthew's account of the instructions to the disciples (10:37,38). The saying about "salt" that "loses its strength" with which Luke rounds off his discourse after he has given these parables is with Matthew a supplement to the Beatitudes (5:13*b*). These parallels probably represent materials that both evangelists drew from their Q source and that each used in the exposition of his own message. It suited the teaching emphases of Matthew to present them in widely separated contexts. Luke has kept them together and used them as preface and sequel to these parables.

In the banquet scene (vss. 21-23), the guests are "the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame," and people hurriedly gathered from "out on the roads, and among

the hedges." The compassion and graciousness of the host move him to place a high premium on responsiveness as such. The heart of the Gospel is that God's interest and outreach are universal and inclusive and that salvation is within reach of everyone. The parables of the Uncompleted Tower and the King's Rash Warfare round out this picture and balance it with a wholesome emphasis on the importance of human effort.

Luke makes it plain that the disciple of Jesus is no slacker. He must be ready to dare and to suffer. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem (vs. 25), and whether Jesus had foreknowledge of how this journey would end or not Luke knows that it ended with rejection and the cross. He accordingly uses the imagery of cross-bearing to say that Christian discipleship is rigorous and costly and that those who undertake it will need to resemble Jesus in readiness to endure hardship.

The evangelist may have in mind some sort of gradation among the followers of Jesus. Some may enter the Kingdom who cannot qualify as "disciples" (vss. 26,27). Luke knows that even Peter "followed at a distance" (22:54); and in reassuring the amazed disciples who ask, "Then who can be saved?" he reports Jesus as saying, "The things that are impossible for men are possible for God!" (18:26,27). Perhaps he thinks the "disciple" who follows Jesus with the fullest degree of fidelity presents an ideal that eludes the average Christian even while constantly challenging him.

The third Gospel was written during the decade of Domitian's persecution. Its author was a contemporary of the men who wrote Hebrews and the Apocalypse of John. In the Christian writings of the last quarter of the first century and the first half of the second century (cf. I and II Tim., and Titus) there is an exaltation of martyrdom as the truest and purest expression of religion. Readiness to pay a hard penalty, even com-

petition for an opportunity to suffer extremely for the sake of Christ became the mark of the fullest discipleship. One might be a Christian without being a "martyr," but to scale the utmost heights of discipleship now and to enjoy the fullest measure of God's approval in the Kingdom involved martyrdom for the sake of Christ (Rev. 2:3; 7:14-17; Heb. 10:32-34; 11:35-38; II Tim. 2:11,12; 4:5-8). These parables probably had some such emphasis as this for the Christian groups for whom his message was intended. Suffering was regarded as testing and maturing discipleship. It marked a man as exalting the cause of Christ above comfort and safety. It alone could initiate men into a community of spirit with Christ.

Where Matthew has, "No one who loves father or mother more than he loves me . . ." (10:37), Luke retains the harsher statement that must have been the more original, "If anyone comes to me without hating his own father and mother . . ." (vs. 26). There is no underestimation of the validity and sacredness of family ties here, but rather an emphasis on the extreme importance and absolute priority of duty to God.

The condemned criminal, especially the insurrectionist, carried his own cross. The figure (vs. 27,28) of bearing one's "own cross" might have been drawn from familiarity with this fact, but for the evangelist it would suggest foreknowledge on the part of Jesus of the method of his death. It would also mean that the disciple like his Master must lay aside all personal considerations and devote himself wholly and at all costs to God's will.

The parables complement the picture of graciousness in verses 21-23, where people are freely invited to partake of the feast. Their thought is that God is generous and that there is abundant provision for all mankind of

whatever station or race. But God is also righteous, and there are severe demands. These parables state the absoluteness and strenuousness of the demands. Urgency rather than caution is their keynote. They carry no suggestion that it were better never to attempt discipleship than to discover after making a beginning that the cross is beyond the power of endurance. The parable of the Uncompleted Tower advises an assessment of resources as a basis of appreciating the privilege of discipleship and the need every disciple will have of divine assistance. The parable of the King's Rash Warfare suggests that no man can afford to resist the demands of God even though they are strenuous. The parables are at one and the same time a tribute to the adequacy of Christ and to man's capacity to respond to the challenge of the heroic.

Jesus preferred to stimulate men by calling them to hard tasks and by stirring their minds with great ideas. He was more confident of the effectiveness of captivating the will than of arousing the feelings. He knew the extremes to which an effervescent enthusiasm might lead and the spiritual callousness that resulted from its collapse. These parables express this unwillingness to take advantage of the popular enthusiasm that his ministry undoubtedly aroused. He had no desire to stir false hopes. He preferred that those who associated themselves with him think soberly and assess the objectives he had in view realistically. He wanted men to be most completely in their right senses and at their moral best when they became members of his circle of friends.

The evangelist (vs. 33) understood the parables to describe the readiness of a disciple to sacrifice for the sake of Christ. Their point with Jesus was rather the necessity of self-appraisal in the interest of a thorough-

going consecration. He regarded half-heartedness as fatal. In any conflict of interests, God's will deserved precedence.

Sensitiveness to social approval was for Jesus the antithesis of religion. What was done in order "to make people praise them" lost all value with God. His was not a religion of "common sense" by the standards of worldly success so well stated in Ecclesiastes (7:15-18):

"I have seen everything in my futile life:
For example, the righteous man perishing in his righteousness,
And the wicked man prolonging his life in his wickedness.
Do not be over-righteous,
And be not excessively wise;
Why should you ruin yourself?
Be not over-wicked,
Nor play the fool;
Why should you die before your time?
It is well that you lay hold of one thing,
And also that your hand let not go of another;
For he who fears God will come forth with both."

Jesus had no fear of "putting all of his eggs into one basket." God was trustworthy and merited man's undivided allegiance. The Godly man's only concern with social approval was that he might so represent God as to awaken in others a desire to be His children. Possible ridicule of an unfinished task (vss. 30,31) is a part of the framework of the story, not for Jesus a part of its message. With him, absolute sincerity gave character to performance. "Faith" rather than "works" was a principle that originated with Jesus rather than Paul. The laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16) showed uneven results at the end of the day, but they had been one in their readiness to attempt the task.

THE LOST SHEEP

LUKE 15:1-7

All the tax-collectors and irreligious people were crowding up to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes grumbled, and said, "This man welcomes irreligious people, and even eats with them!" So in speaking to them he used this figure: "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep, and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go in search of the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he finds it, he puts it on his shoulders with joy, and when he reaches home, he calls in his friends and neighbors, and says to them, 'Congratulate me, for I have found my lost sheep!' I tell you, in just that way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinful person who repents, than over ninety-nine upright people who do not need any repentance."

MATTHEW 18:12-14

"What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills, and go in search of the one that is astray? And if he happens to find it, I tell you he rejoices more over it than he does over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just that way, it is the will of my Father in heaven that not a single one of these children be lost."

THE FOUR PARABLES OF HIS FIFTEENTH CHAPTER ARE used by Luke to illustrate his discourse on God's redemptive love for "sinners." The setting for the discourse (vss. 1-3) is a part of the message. The setting is created for the purpose of bringing the opposing groups vividly before the reader. The materials are drawn from Mark; but they are not, as in Mark, an actual dinner scene but rather an allusion to Jesus' habit of exercising great freedom in eating with anyone he chose and in complete disregard of traditional scruples.

Mark 2:15,16:

"He was at table in his house, with many tax-collectors and irreligious people who were at table with him and his disciples, for there were many of them among his followers. And when the scribes who were of the Pharisees' party saw that he was eating with irreligious people and tax-collectors,

they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax-collectors and irreligious people?' "

Luke 15:1,2:

"All the tax-collectors and irreligious people were crowding up to him. And the Pharisees and scribes grumbled, and said, 'This man welcomes irreligious people, and even eats with them!' "

Matthew has his own version of the parable of the Lost Sheep. Differences in detail between the two versions suggest that neither of the evangelists knew the parable in the form used by the other. Matthew probably drew his version from the source known as M, and Luke from his L source.

The contexts in which the parable appears differ more widely than the details of the story itself. In Matthew, it is one of a series of sayings about children (vss. 10,14). The question had been raised about greatness in the Kingdom (vs. 1), and Jesus "called a child to him and had him stand among them" as illustrative of his answer. The parable is made to illustrate the inestimable value of the child as personifying the qualities in which Kingdom greatness consists.

Luke is developing his favorite theme of God as the Friend of the outcast and the sinner. It is the fact that the sheep is "lost" that is impressive to him. He uses the three parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son as illustrations of God's sympathy and active outreach after sinners and brings his message to its climax with the parable of the Elder Brother.

The general theme of Matthew's message in his eighteenth chapter is greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven (vs. 1). The illustrations employed indicate that "the really great" are they who see the true significance of

man, whether innocent or sinful, in the sight of God, and who therefore make the highest welfare of people the end of all their effort. It is unthinkable that a "really great" man could feel "scornful of one single little child" (vs. 10). When a "really great" man has been wronged (vs. 15), he will not nurse his feelings but in a thoroughly fraternal spirit will discuss the matter privately with the other person with the single thought of keeping him as a "brother." On the same principle, the "really great" man will not be mathematical in the matter of forgiveness, but will forgive his brother from his heart, the criterion of his behavior being "what my heavenly Father will do" (vs. 35). The parable of the Lost Sheep (vss. 12-14) serves, in this context, to assert the significance of human life as such. Man matters to God in the midst of the whole of creation because he is a moral being capable of sinning, and by the same token capable of saintliness. He may stray away from God's purposes for him, but even so he is more significant in God's eyes than the unstraying remainder of the universe.

With Luke, the emphasis is made more specific by the setting of the discourse (vss. 1-3). He seems to have in mind the concrete problem of "eating" together. To appreciate the acuteness of this problem in the first century Church, one needs only to re-read the second chapter of Galatians where Paul relates, "When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, for his own conduct condemned him" (vs. 11). He then says specifically that it was Peter's attitude of compromise in the matter of eating with Gentiles that constituted what was essentially a betrayal of the Christian position (vss. 12-14):

"For until some people came from James, he used to eat with the heathen, but after they came, he began to draw

back and hold aloof, for fear of the party of circumcision. The other Jewish Christians followed his example in concealing their real views, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their pose. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the good news, I said to Cephas, right before them all, 'If you live like a heathen and not like a Jew, though you are a Jew yourself, why should you try to make the heathen live like Jews?' "

It was this same Peter whom God had to warn in a sort of second Pentecost (Acts 10:15), "Do not call what God has cleansed unclean." How prominent this problem of eating was in the life of Jesus himself is difficult to say, but there is no doubt of its acuteness in the churches of the latter part of the first century. Christian leadership in the main took a liberal position on the matter, insisted on the completely non-racial character of the Gospel, and used the example of Jesus in the matter of eating to show the utter irrelevance of race to Christian brotherhood (cf. Luke 5:30; Gal. 3:26-29). On no other basis could Christian missions have triumphed.

In the present instance, Luke represents Jesus as thoroughly cordial toward people who were ordinarily avoided and as going the length, for some repugnant and even unpardonable, of eating with them. The genuineness of his friendliness, as evidenced by his democratic eating habits, made him doubly effective in interpreting religion to great multitudes, as appeared in the fact that "all the tax-collectors and irreligious people were crowding up to hear him" (vs. 1). The leaders of the Jewish church seemed to feel Jesus' effectivness was due to a cheapening of salvation, and so they "grumbled" (vs. 2). In replying to the grumblers of his own day in the guise of Jesus' contemporaries, Luke tells three stories showing God's interest in the people

whom they despised but who were always "crowding up to hear" Jesus; and then he tells the story of the Elder Brother as a personification of the spirit of aristocratic, racialistic religion in its grumbling attitude toward the equalitarian religion of Jesus.

The Roman world of Luke's day was an aristocratic world. The leaders who popularized Christianity in that world saw, however, that the future lay with the dispossessed and downtrodden multitudes. It was to them, therefore, that they made their primary appeal. Judaism was also a great missionary religion in that world, but its leaders limited their success hopelessly by insisting on a racial requirement for membership in the synagogue. It is eloquent testimony to the wisdom of men like Paul and the evangelists and to the purity of their apprehension of the spirit of Jesus that they insisted on the universalistic, non-racial, thoroughly spiritual character of the Gospel.

"Lost" in both versions of the parable has a twofold meaning. It looks forward to the general Judgment and describes the destiny of those who are excluded from the Kingdom. But though present, that is not the primary meaning here. Rather it describes a disarrangement or maladjustment that defeats normal functions. The "lost" sheep has wandered from the fold into strange and dangerous paths. "Lost" money has been taken out of circulation. A "lost" son is estranged from his father, lives in ways that violate his father's will, and is an alien to the family in which he was nurtured.

The "ninety-nine" sheep who are left are not represented as neglected. They are not the subject of the parable. Absorbing interest in the sheep that has strayed is the single emphasis. A search that continues "until he finds it" testifies to the depth and intensity of this interest. Nothing deters or diverts the shepherd.

"Joy" rather than censure is the mood of the man when the search ends in success. Instead of driving the sheep home, "he puts it on his shoulders with joy, and when he reaches home, he calls in his friends and neighbors, and says to them, 'Congratulate me, for I have found my lost sheep!' "

The "righteous" (Luke 15:7; Matt. 18:13) are not specifically identified. The character of the allusion, however, suggests that both writers used it as an indirect thrust at Judaism as fostering a type of religious devotion that was fundamentally spurious and that distinctly disappointed God.

Jesus felt that God's love for every individual human being laid upon him and upon every truly religious man the obligation to exemplify a similarly helpful solicitude. The writers of the Gospels have not exaggerated this note in the example and message of Jesus. In making it so nearly the essence of his own statement of Christianity, Luke has preserved with fine accuracy of insight a characteristic feature of Jesus' original message. In whatever connection Jesus first spoke this parable of the Lost Sheep, he must have intended by it to stress both the greatness and the thoroughly individual character of God's love. It is not humanity in the mass but the obscurest individual in his own right as a person that God loves. It is of no little consequence, therefore, to be of the slightest service to another person. To be "scornful of one single little child" whose "angels have continual access" to a God who is fatherly is irreligion, whatever one's profession or one's institutional status.

There was no conflict between the justice and the love of God in Jesus' mind. He found in the thoroughness of God's knowledge the basis of unity. The moral confusion that man in his limitation may think he sees in

this "joy" over a sinner who repents, or in a feast that celebrates the return of a "prodigal," or in the equal pay for the laborer who worked only the last hour of the day simply did not occur to Jesus.

Jesus' ministry was characterized by immense popularity. There was no waning of this popularity toward the close of his career, either. His opponents among the ecclesiastical leaders were able to arouse the political authorities with the suggestion that Jesus might initiate a rebellion because his popularity with the common people continued. Luke's statement that "all the tax-collectors and irreligious people were crowding up to hear him" suggests that these groups were increasingly and customarily drawn to Jesus. His readiness to eat with them, the active goodness that he manifested in his contacts with them, the respect that he accorded them, the sympathy with which he regarded their interests, the tenderness of his representations of God's love, his complete oblivion to social conventions were qualities in his character that gave meaning to the words that fell from his lips. It is these vital qualities that appear in such parables as that of the Lost Sheep.

THE LOST COIN

LUKE 15:8-10

Or what woman who has ten silver coins and loses one, does not light the lamp and sweep the house and look carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls in her friends and neighbors, and says to them, 'Congratulate me, for I have found the coin that I lost!' In just that way, I tell you, there is joy among the angels of God over one sinful person who repents!"

THE CONTEXT AND GENERAL TEACHING OF THE PARABLE of the Lost Coin are substantially the same as for its twin parable of the Lost Sheep. These parables were probably independent of one another orginally and were brought into their present association by Luke or by the author of the written source that he used.

This parable had certain distinctive values in the message of the evangelist, however. Not the least of these values was that the chief actor in the story was a woman. Women enjoyed a greater degree of freedom in the Hellenistic than in the Jewish world, so that the numerous evidences of their activity in the first mission churches are not surprising. Luke was probably a member of the church at Philippi where the influence and participation of women were outstanding (Phil. 4:2,3; Acts 16:14,40). In his story of the growth of Christianity as a movement he notes from beginning to end the important role of women. Of those present in "the upper room" at Jerusalem, "the women" are mentioned along with the disciples, and it was "with the women" that the disciples were "all devoting themselves with one mind to prayer" (Acts 1:14). Women were among the most eager hearers of the early missionaries, and they were usually among the first converts (Acts 8: 12; 16:13; 17:4,12,34). They endured persecution along with the men (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4), and some of them "had the gift of prophecy" (Acts 21:9). The

woman of the parable who looks for the lost coin "until she finds it" and then "calls in her friends and neighbors" probably typified for the evangelist the important role of women in the work of the Church.

It is entirely likely, too, that Luke saw meaning in the detail that the lost coin was within the house. A purely nominal Christianity had become a problem as real as outright apostasy (cf. Rev. 3:15,16; Heb. 5:12), and the evangelist may have meant to warn that people could be lost within the Church.

The object of concern is a coin, rather than a sheep or a son, and so could not stray of its own accord. Its loss would be due to oversight or negligence, and self-condemnation as well as pity would be a motive in all efforts at recovery. Some recognition of the bearing of circumstances upon the loss and redemption of a life may be reflected in these details. The major emphasis for the evangelist, however, is that every individual, whether a sinner or not, matters tremendously to God and that all efforts for the recovery of the "lost" are worth making.

The loss of one coin out of ten is like the loss of one sheep out of a hundred. It is the importance of the individual in his own right rather than merely as one of a group that is involved. If sparrows that sell "five for two cents" are not "forgotten in God's sight" (12:7), then surely no life and no circumstance that vitally affects the most obscure individual escapes the divine attention.

This woman's house, if typical at all, probably had no windows. A light would be needed even in the day, and the broom with which to cover every inch and corner of the dirt floor would aid in the search. The woman uses every device at hand to insure success. She is a picture of absorbing interest and of tireless

energy as she makes the search of the house. Her joy in the success of her quest parallels her interest and her tirelessness. A passionate desire to recover what was lost and joy in the realization of that desire constitute the point of the imagery.

In whatever connection this parable was first spoken, it served to illustrate Jesus' appreciation of individual persons. He took them where he found them and believed that they could with God's help and the encouragement of human sympathy make themselves fit for admission to the Kingdom. A new and better life was within reach for everyone, and by every device at his disposal Jesus stirred men to enter upon that life.

THE PRODIGAL SON

LUKE 15:11-24

And he said,

"A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the property.' So he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered up all he had, and went away to a distant country, and there he squandered his property by fast living. After he had spent it all, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. And he went and hired himself out to a resident of the country, and he sent him into his fields to tend pigs. And he was ready to fill himself with the pods the pigs were eating, and no one would give him anything. When he came to himself he said, 'How many hired men my father has, who have more than enough to eat, and here I am, dying of hunger! I will get up, and go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your eyes; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired men!" ' And he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and pitied him, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your eyes; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired men!' But his father said to his slaves, 'Make haste and get out the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and get the calf we are fattening, and kill it, and let us feast and celebrate, for my son here was dead, and he has come to life; he was lost, and he is found!' So they began to celebrate."

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE PARABLES IN THE LUKAN discourse is exceedingly effective. It marks the evangelist as a truly great preacher. In the first two stories, the emphasis is on a love that seeks and finds the "lost" and that knows the joy of recovery. There is no less of sympathy in the parable of the Prodigal Son, but there is the additional emphasis on a necessary moral response on the part of the man who has erred.

Luke would have protested the suggestion that this parable was an adequate statement of the Gospel. He shared the other great convictions of the primitive Christian message, as the discourses both of his Gospel and of the Acts clearly show. But the emphasis which he makes by his use of the parable of the Prodigal Son is a crucial one. He insists on a confession that marked repentance as real. A man who expected divine forgiveness needed

to give evidence of a recognition of the frailty of his own powers and of the bankruptcy of his own moral resources. He could claim nothing as his right but would throw himself wholly on God's mercy. In so doing, he would find in God a gracious readiness to forgive the past and to accord him the status of a son.

Such a confession is for Luke the basis of "God's approval." The theme is further developed (18:10-14) in the story of the Pharisee and the tax-collector who "went up to the Temple to pray." The mood of the tax-collector and of the prodigal is the complete opposite of the self-satisfaction of the Pharisee and of the elder brother. The second story is an effective reinforcement of the point of the first:

> "The Pharisee stood up and uttered this prayer to himself: 'O God, I thank you that I am not like other men, greedy, dishonest, or adulterous, like that tax-collector. I fast two days in the week; I pay tithes on everything I get.' But the tax-collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast, and said, 'O God, have mercy on a sinner like me!' "

The confession in each instance expresses the recognition of moral reality. There is no trace of make-believe. There is a lightening of the moral load for the individual when he lays his case unreservedly in the hands of God and simply seeks his mercy. It is exactly that mood that Luke seeks to cultivate in his own audience by telling these stories.

The request of the younger son for his "share of the property" is made as though it expected compliance. It may have been premature and unwise, but it was not an unheard of thing. In the book of Ecclesiasticus (33:19-23) there is the indication that it was more or less customary for a father to divide his property be-

tween his sons before he died. It was deemed unwise to do this too long before death, however, lest the heirs become weary of providing for their parents. In such a division of property (Deut. 21:17) the older son would get two thirds and the younger one third of the estate. It is not that the request of the younger son is an innovation that makes it objectionable, but that it gives the impression of impatience and pride.

Nothing in the story indicates that the conscious purpose of the youth was to enter upon an evil life. He probably wanted to try his fortune and live his life according to his own tastes. The unfortunate outcome may have been as due to inexperience as to anything else. But whatever the explanation, he fell into bad habits and his associations were degrading. Then famine and unemployment, circumstances over which he had no control, came; and the plight of the boy became desperate.

The destitution to which he came is in vivid contrast to the picture of his departure from home. Then he "gathered up all he had, and went away," in effect burning his bridges behind him, never thinking that he would one day wander wearily back to the quietness and security that had probably become tiresome. He is a picture of complete confidence and self-sufficiency. His abandon, his throwing of caution to the winds, his dismissal of the thought of retreat and defeat would be assets, if his life had first been mastered by a worthy sense of values and of mission. Unlike Abraham, who sojourned in a strange land but who "was looking forward to the city with sure foundations, designed and built by God" (Heb. 11:10), this youth had all of his wealth in his wallet. The sour insinuation of the older brother (vs. 30) that he wasted his property "with women of the streets" is probably an accurate index to

his behavior in general. The outcome was penury and defeat and the arrival at a status lower than that of his father's servants.

The disciplined and spiritually stabilized person finds himself heavily taxed by the trials of worldly existence. But where inward disorganization is matched with outward chaos, disaster is complete. And yet such an extremity may become a reminder of better things. It acted in this way for the prodigal.

The hopeful thing about this youth was that he made no excuses. He did the best that was possible in the bad circumstances in which he was placed: "He went and hired himself out to a resident of the country" who "sent him into the fields to tend pigs." He did not refuse this degrading occupation, but it did begin to dawn on him that there was a better country and that this better country was his true home. In contrast with the generous provision that he associated with his homeland, "no one would give him anything" (vs. 16) where he was. His employer provided for the feeding of the pigs, as circumstances permitted, but made no provision for the youth. It was cheaper to hire another workman than to get more pigs.

When "an angel of the Lord" rescued Peter from jail (Acts 12:11f.) and then left him, Peter "came to himself." He had thought he was "having a vision," but now the reality of his situation appeared. Similarly (Luke 8:35), the demoniac of Gadara, no longer possessed by demons is described as "sitting there, at Jesus' feet, with his clothes on and in his right mind." The same conception is involved when it is said of the prodigal that "he came to himself." He had been like a "possessed" man. He had been living in a world of shadows instead of realities. Now he returned to his senses and saw things as they were. The old values

associated with father, home, sound morality attracted him, and he discovered within himself a new and determined aspiration to make these values his own. It is repentance that is being portrayed, and it has the character of recovery from the dementia of sin.

Life and death (vs. 24) are the key words in the picture of restoration to the household of the father. In the joyous announcement of recovery, "dead" is made the synonym of "lost" and "alive" the equivalent of "found." They describe the normal relations between persons as having been disrupted and then restored. The son has been "dead" and "lost" only with reference to his accustomed relationships with his father, and he is "alive" and "found" when normal social intercourse has been restored. The meaning is substantially that of Romans 6:11,13 and 7:9 and by implication looks toward the further meanings of Romans 15:22, where moral restoration is completed in resurrection. Christianity fostered the idea of life and death in terms of morally determined relationships. Physical death came to mean only the interruption of associations that depended on bodily existence, but did not terminate other significant phases of life that were distinctly spiritual.

For Jesus, the focus of attention in the parable was almost certainly the father as he watched and waited for the return of the estranged son. Religion for him took its character from God's own principles of action. He felt that the total life of God was to be understood in terms of fatherliness and that a representation of God in such terms would move men most effectively to prepare to enter the Kingdom. This parable served Jesus as a picturesque statement of God's absorbing interest in persons, all potentially his children, about whom he remained optimistic even when they sinned, and for whom forgiveness waited only on wholehearted repentance.

THE ELDER BROTHER

LUKE 15:25-32

"But his elder son was in the field. When he came in and approached the house, he heard music and dancing, and he called one of the servants to him and asked him what it meant. He said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the calf he has been fattening, because he has gotten him back alive and well.' But he was angry, and would not go into the house. And his father came out and urged him. And he said to his father, 'Here I have served you all these years, and have never disobeyed an order of yours, and you have never given me a kid, so that I could entertain my friends. But when your son here came, who has eaten up your property with women of the street, for him you killed the calf you have been fattening!' But he said to him, 'My child, you have been with me all the time, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because your brother was dead, and has come to life, and was lost and is found!' "

THE PARABLES OF THE LOST SHEEP AND THE LOST COIN close with the note of "joy." The story of the Prodigal Son also comes to its proper close with the statement (vs. 25), "So they began to celebrate." If the next story (vss. 25-32) were not there at all it would not be missed. It has more or less the appearance of an appendix. The probabilities are that the parable of the Elder Brother was originally a story complete within itself and that it owed its association with the other three stories of Luke's fifteenth chapter to the contribution it made to the evangelist's message.

It is possible, of course, to regard the stories of these two sons as halves of a single picture in the original message of Jesus. In favor of such a view, it is maintained that the first parable seems to contemplate the differing behavior of "two sons" and to look forward to the contrasted attitudes of the father and the older brother toward the wayward youth. This view, however, is probably influenced by the customary use of the stories since the time of the publication of our third Gospel.

It is certainly true that Luke uses the two stories as halves of a single picture. It served him admirably in contrasting the Christian and Jewish missionary criteria to the disadvantage of the latter, and, further, for a defense of the Gospel against the charge of antinomianism.

An objection to Christianity that Paul found most difficult to meet was that "faith" as a basis of acceptance with God was the equivalent of a cancellation of the moral demands of the Law. The questions with which Paul is occupied in the central section (chaps. 6-8) of his letter to the Romans express a thoroughly practical concern in this regard: "Are we to continue to sin to increase the spread of mercy?" (6:1); "Are we to sin, because we live not under law but under mercy?" (6:15); "Then what shall we conclude? That the Law is sin?" (7:7); "Did what was good, then, prove the death of me?" (7:13). Paul resolves the difficulty as best he was able by maintaining the soundness of the moral demands of the Law but pointing out its lack of effectiveness for securing obedience because human nature required something more dynamic than a catalogue of virtues, however true it might be (8:1-17). But Paul's solution of the matter was not universally satisfactory and convincing, as is shown by the confusion that still existed toward the close of the first century and the opening of the second, when a leader of some prominence asked (James 2:14-18) very pointed questions:

> "My brothers, what is the good of a man's saying he has faith, if he has no good deeds to show? Can faith save him? . . . So faith by itself, if it has no good deeds to show, is dead."

Luke stands midway between Paul and the author

of the Epistle of James, and he deals with this continuing problem in his own distinctive way. He has pictured God's concern for the outcast and the sinner and has emphasized the importance and possibility of the wanderer's restoration. But he must also show that the goodness of God is not compromised by his mercy, and he does this with great effectiveness by pairing the parable of the Prodigal Son with that of the Elder Brother. If it is once granted that the reclamation and re-creation of lives matter to God and are the major task of religion, then there can be little doubt of the greater moral value of the paternal as against the legal attitude. God is not less righteous because he is more of a father than a judge. The divine mercy will express itself in seeking the "lost" and at the same time will maintain moral values by conditioning forgiveness on repentance. The elder brother has missed this whole point; he sees voilated standards and is "angry." The father sees his son who was "dead" and who "has come to life," and he rejoices. Righteousness is not minimized but fulfilled and increased by an exercise of mercy that redeems the sinner and enables him to prefer goodness to evil. That is the conclusion of the Lukan message that was introduced by the complaint (vs. 2), "This man welcomes irreligious people, and even eats with them!"

The first impression of the "elder brother" is not an unfavorable one. He has been in the field at work and as he approaches the house becomes aware of unaccustomed activities. He makes a thoroughly natural inquiry of a servant. He lays himself open to criticism only when he reacts with anger to news that has made his father and the rest of the household begin "to celebrate."

The servant accounts for the music and the dancing

by saying that the father has got back "your brother . . . alive and well" (vs. 28). The adjective literally refers to bodily health, and the natural concern of the father has been for the continuance of the youth's life. But the very fact of his having returned and welcomed the chance to fit himself into the family again signifies that he is "alive and well" in spirit as well as in body. When the elder brother refuses to see this deeper meaning he shows himself to be as alien to his father's house as the younger brother has once been.

This spirit of the stranger shows more clearly when the father comes out to talk with him. He is as ungenerous toward his father as toward his brother, and it is his mercenary spirit that explains his total reaction. He overlooks the fact that the remainder of the property is his (vs. 32) and that privilege as well as labor has been his lot. He ridicules his father for softness and sentimentality by refusing to admit that the returned wanderer is his brother, referring to him rather as "your son . . . who has eaten up your property with women of the streets" (vs. 30). His own friends are more respectable, but his father has never entertained them! Perhaps he even winks at his scapegrace son's licentiousness and is at heart a reprobate himself.

The father "came out" of the house to meet the angry, older son just as he had done when the younger "was still a long way off." His address is as warmly affectionate: "My child . . . everything I have is yours." It has required no crisis to elicit appreciation in his instance. The virtues he undoubtedly exemplifies are not minimized. As when Jesus, facing another man who could boast of having kept all of the commandments since childhood, "looked at him and loved him" though clearly seeing the "one thing" he lacked (Mark

10:21), so here the father's attitude is wholly that of love.

The serious defect of this older brother is that he holds in contempt those who are unlike himself. He is thoroughly satisfied with himself and finds in his own virtuousness the only standard he will recognize for judging others. It is almost as though Paul had some such person in mind when he described love as the supreme "spiritual gift" (I Cor. 13:4-6):

> "Love is patient and kind. Love is not envious or boastful. It does not put on airs. It is not rude. It does not insist on its rights. It does not become angry. It is not resentful. . . . It will bear anything, believe anything, hope for anything. . . ."

The parable closes without describing the final behavior of the brothers. The older brother may or may not have entered the house and caught the spirit of the occasion. The younger may or may not have remained true to his new resolutions. This silence is as effective as anything that is expressly said. If the parable was addressed either by Jesus or Luke to a conflict situation, it would serve on the one hand to avoid a mathematical appraisal of the success of the Gospel, and on the other it would express optimism with reference to the opposition, whoever might compose it.

It is possible that this parable was a part of Jesus' rejoinder on some occasion to criticisms of his too human applications of religious principles. His critics could insist on their theoretical agreement with him but all the while brand him as erratic and dangerous because his specific applications violated social conventions too radically. The elder brother, if representing the orthodox leadership of the Jewish church, would serve to show their error: they saw only their violated

traditions without glimpsing the larger truth that the original intent of these very traditions was the encouragement and protection of personality. Their legalism led to a conception of religion so rigid and inflexible as to make it a moral straitjacket instead of a source of inspiration and of social ingeniousness. They were, to use a mixed figure, muscle-bound by their own virtues. Jesus, by contrast, advocated spiritual agility and alertness, and insisted on a freedom that made it possible to meet unpredictable emergencies on their merits. In making love the integrating principle in God's life, he found abundant warrant for mercy toward the erring without the slightest blurring or confusion of moral distinctions.

Few students of the Gospels have seen this quality in Jesus more clearly and with greater appreciation than the liberal Jewish scholar, C. G. Montefiore. Thinking of the validity of Jesus' criticisms of the type of leadership that was dominant in the Jewish church and of the originality of such insights as these parables of Luke's fifteenth chapter illustrates, he writes:

"He is sent to the lost sheep, to the sinner. But to them . . . his message is not merely one of denouncement. He goes among them and eats with them. He will touch their heart in a number of different ways: he will touch it by arousing admiration, hope, love, by encouragement and consolation, by powerful suggestion that the bonds of sin can be, or have been broken, that a new life can be or has been begun. . . . To call sinners to repentance, to denounce vice generally, is one thing. To have intercourse with sinners and seek their conversion by seeming to countenance them and by comforting them—that is quite another thing." [1]

[1] *Op. cit.*, I, cxvii.

The parable of the Elder Brother was a message to leaders who saw only a fraction of their mission. It was a thoroughly hopeful, skillfully ingratiating challenge to a more liberal conception of their task and at the same time a plea for tolerance and understanding of his own viewpoint and practice if they found them distasteful for themselves.

THE UNJUST STEWARD

LUKE 16:1-13

And he said to his disciples,

"There was a rich man who had a manager, and it was reported to him that this man was squandering his property. So he called him in and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Make an accounting for your conduct of my affairs, for you cannot be manager any longer!' Then the manager said to himself, 'What am I going to do, because my master is going to take my position away from me? I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I know what I will do, so that when I am removed from my position people will take me into their homes.' Then he called in each of his master's debtors, and he said to the first one, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'Eight hundred gallons of oil.' And he said to him, 'Here is your agreement; sit right down and write four hundred!' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He answered, 'Fifteen hundred bushels of wheat.' He said to him, 'Here is your agreement; write twelve hundred.' And his master praised the dishonest manager, because he had acted shrewdly. For the sons of this age are shrewder in their relation to their own age than the sons of the light. So I tell you, make friends for yourselves with your ill-gotten wealth, so that when it fails, they may take you into the eternal dwellings. The man who can be trusted in a very small matter can be trusted in a large one, and the man who cannot be trusted in a very small matter cannot be trusted in a large one. So if you have proved untrustworthy in using your ill-gotten wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have been untrustworthy about what belonged to someone else, who will give you what belongs to you? No servant can belong to two masters, for he will either hate one and love the other, or he will stand by one and make light of the other. You cannot serve God and money!"

THE ONLY SHIFT OF SITUATION FROM THAT OF THE PRE-ceding chapter in Luke is that Jesus is represented (vs. 1) as speaking "to his disciples" instead of "the Pharisees and scribes" (15:2,3). The general tenor of the teaching remains anti-Pharisaic, however, as is indicated in the statement (vs. 14), "The Pharisees, who were avaricious, heard all this, and they ridiculed him."

The thought that seems to connect the two sections of teaching is the faults of the Pharisees. It is their self-righteousnes and corresponding contempt for sinners that are pointed out in chapter 15, and their "avariciousness" or material-mindedness in chapter 16.

The two parables of the present chapter appear in

Luke only and are used as illustrations in his discussion of the uses and abuses of wealth. The evangelist's treatment of his theme is further developed in the section that comes between the parables (vss. 9-18). The first half of this section (vss. 9-13) serves as a comment on the parable of the Unjust Steward, and the second half (vss. 14-18) as an introduction for the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

These intervening verses that appear here as part of a single discourse are widely distributed in Matthew: verse 13 in Matthew 6:24; verse 16 in Matthew 11:12,13; verse 17 in Matthew 5:18; verse 18 in Matthew 5:32. The two very different adaptations of the same teaching materials illustrate how each evangelist was doing a more creative thing than merely preserving a historical record. Each was a preacher with a message of his own. This message was for him the Gospel as applied to the needs of the situation in which he was at work. As definitely as there was for Paul "the gospel that I preach to the heathen" (Gal. 2:2), as distinguished from the "different gospel" that others might preach (Gal. 1:7), each writer of our Gospels had his own distinctive message. He couched his message in the form of biography, and he used historical materials, both narrative and discourse; but his primary interest was evangelistic rather than historical.

Luke seems to feel that the possession of wealth has a morally corrosive effect on the human spirit. It is the possession of wealth, not merely love for it, that is dangerous. Perhaps he thinks that a man cannot possess it without loving it. And yet he is certain that wealth can be used in ways that God commends and that can save men from its evil influences. Presumably, God alone has the wisdom and the goodness to own it in an absolute sense because he alone sees its proper relation-

ship to spiritual ends. The conclusion is that man's relationship to wealth must be kept strictly to that of trusteeship.

The evangelist's statement of the point of the parable (vs. 9) lends itself to misunderstanding. It is that "unrighteous mammon," not "ill-gotten wealth" as Goodspeed translates it, is to be used to secure entrance into "the eternal dwelling." He does not have in mind the thoroughly immoral inferences that might be and that have been drawn from his rather clumsy statement. To those who draw such false inferences, he would have said, "Such people will be condemned as they deserve!" even as Paul did (Rom. 3:8) when accused of advocating the doing of evil "that good may come out of it." He clarifies himself (vss. 10-13) by adding that only those whose lives acknowledge the mastery of God can avoid the mastery of "mammon" and make it servant instead. It is in making "mammon" servant instead of master that they show themselves trustworthy "in a very small matter" and become worthy of trust "in a large one."

It is possible for the parable itself to be understood as glorifying mere shrewdness. The manager who is commended is a trickster and has always been. For years he has wasted the "rich man's" property, oppressed the tenants and cheated those who purchased what was raised on the land. When called to account, he covers his dishonesty by buying the good will of those whom he has wronged by altering their accounts to the disadvantage of his employer. It has to be remembered, however, that the parables are stories constructed from the materials of life situations with no thought that these situations will be regarded as Christian. The behavior of the characters in a story is not commended simply by the telling of the story. Many details in the

parable convey no lesson even though they contribute to making a completed picture that does carry a message. The thing that is commended in this manager is that with the certainty of a day of judgment ahead, he gets ready for it.

The debtors in the parable may have been persons who owed for produce purchased from the estate, in which event the concessions would be from the price charged or from interest due. On the other hand, they may have been sharecroppers who obligated themselves to pay the landlord part of their crops for the use of the land.

The "rich man" discovers the manager's habitual dishonesty and for that reason calls him to account. He is impressed with the energy which the guilty man displays under the circumstances. The latter does not idle when action is open to him. He employs his intelligence and energy to the utmost to achieve a measure of security out of the midst of collapse. That he uses the ways of the world for the accomplishment of worldly ends merely marks him as a "son of this age"; he is in no sense regarded as a "son of light."

Intimate relationship, especially in the spiritual sphere, is frequently described as "sonship" in New Testament usage (cf. Matt. 8:12; 13:38; 23:15; Luke 20:36; Acts 13:10; Eph. 5: 8; etc.). It is such relationship that is involved in the phrases "sons of this age" and "sons of the light" (vs. 8). The basic contrast is between two "ages," as in Matthew 12:32: "Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither *in this age* nor in *that which is to come*" (cf. Mark 10:29; Luke 18:30; Eph. 1:21). "This age" is the world order that now exists. It is essentially evil in that it is under the control of Satan and his demonic assistants. It is doomed to destruction because

God is against it. Its "wisdom" is of a piece with the character of the "age" and will turn out to be folly. This "wisdom" is effective only while "this age" lasts and so will not be adopted by those whose "manner of life" is elsewhere.

The "coming age" is a new order of life to be realized on the earth when the sovereignty of God supplants that of the devil. Christians are described in Hebrews (6:4-6) as having come under the influence of "the powers of the age to come." The phrase "sons of the light" (cf. I Thess. 5:5; Eph. 5:8; John 12:36) is an equivalent for "sons of the coming age," the idea being that "light" as contrasted with "darkness" is the true symbol of that age. Paul's statement to the Corinthians (II Cor. 6:14) makes this clear:

> "Do not get into close and incongruous relations with unbelievers. What partnership can uprightness have with iniquity, or what can light have to do with darkness? How can Christ agree with Belial?"

"Mammon" originally was a name for "the god of this world." It came to represent the material side of life in general, or wealth in the broad sense. The phrase "mammon of unrighteousnes" (vs. 9) may mean any one of three things: (1) wealth as inherently evil, (2) wealth as a prolific source of evil because it so usually confuses the conscience and distorts spiritual vision, (3) wealth dishonestly acquired. Goodspeed translates it "your ill-gotten wealth."

It was never the opinion of Jesus that critical situations warranted a moratorium on the principles of the Kingdom. He was a man of action, and his teaching involved an advocacy of action rather than quiescence. He was consistently pacific, but never passive. His personal qualities were rather those of a leader than of a

teacher in the strictest sense of the word. He did not discourse on truth in the abstract, but inspired men to embody it and give it dynamic demonstration. It is this quality and emphasis that originally was expressed in the parable of the Unjust Steward. As a "son of this age," the manager left no stone unturned to make his future secure. He evaluated the emergency he faced accurately and acted promptly and in terms that under the circumstances were effective to insure a favorable result. The concrete steps he took were unjustifiable by the standards of the Kingdom; and yet his alertness, his immediate and energetic use of opportunity, his aggressive application of the principles in which he believed, his resolution to use the present to determine the future represented a spirit that "the sons of light" might well emulate.

The point of the parable for Jesus was that the religious man ought to be similarly resourceful in the interest of the values of the Kingdom and in ways that expressed the life of the Kingdom. Zeal, energy, ingeniousness brought to the service of God are at the same premium as when employed for the interests of "this age."

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

LUKE 16:19-31

"There was once a rich man, who used to dress in purple and fine linen, and to live in luxury every day. And a beggar named Lazarus was put down at his gate covered with sores and eager to satisfy his hunger with what was thrown away from the rich man's table. Why, the very dogs came and licked his sores. And it came about that the beggar died and was carried away by the angels to the companionship of Abraham, and the rich man too died and was buried. And in Hades he looked up, tormented as he was, and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus beside him. And he called to him and said, 'Father Abraham! take pity on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in torment, here in the flames!' And Abraham said, 'My child, remember that you received your blessings in your lifetime, and Lazarus had his misfortunes in his; and now he is being comforted here, while you are in anguish. Besides there is a great chasm set between you and us, so that those who want to go over from this side to you cannot, and they cannot cross from your side to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers; let him warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torture.' Abraham answered, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them.' But he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone will go to them from the dead, they will repent!' He answered, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!'"

TO THE CHARGES THAT THE PHARISEES WERE SELF-righteous and contemptuous, Luke adds in the latter half of the present chapter that they were also "avaricious" (vs. 15) and that they misunderstood and were untrue to the Old Testament (vss. 16,17). The two sections of the parable serve the evangelist as vivid illustrations of these charges. The Pharisees function for the Christian preacher primarily as sermonic aids. Luke is concerned with them as elements in an effective setting for his message, and his message has to do with the problems and needs of his own generation.

Luke uses the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, in the first instance, to complete his discussion of the right use of wealth. He warns that its selfish use will turn a man from his high vocation as a "son of light"

and make him completely and irremediably a "son of this age." It did exactly that for the rich man in the story. It might, of course, have been put to better uses, and when wealth is made the servant rather than the master of life it makes more certain the admission "into the eternal dwellings."

It may be that Luke went to the extreme of using the parable to teach an unconditioned reversal of worldly status in "the new age." His version of the Beatitudes (6:21-26) lends some color to such a possibility:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours! . . .
But alas for you who are rich, for you have had your comfort!
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied! . . .
Alas for you who have plenty to eat now, for you will be hungry!
Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh! . . .
Alas for you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep!"

The parable as he gives it sounds almost like a narrative version of these pronouncements of approval and of woe. In "the present age" the poor are miserable and the rich happy, but in the Kingdom the opposite will be true. The wise man will choose the world in which he wishes his happiness to be, realizing that the two are so different that he cannot possibly make the blessings of both his possessions.

Only "ancient" religions were officially tolerated in the Roman world. The Scriptures were an invaluable asset to Judaism in that they rooted it in antiquity, authenticated it as supernaturally revealed, and furnished it with a usable body of teaching materials. The

first Christians took over the Scriptures as a matter of course, and as long as they were regarded as a sect of Judaism they enjoyed the values that went with it. The missionary program of the Church, the Jewish revolt against Rome, and the growing suspicion of Christianity that finally culminated in Domitian's persecution brought about a clear differentiation between the Synagogue and the Church. Christian leadership was under the necessity or showing that the Jewish Scriptures were implicitly Christian or else losing the advantages that inhered in the possession of so valuable a body of literature. As time went on, there were leaders such as Marcion who felt that the Old Testament was a disadvantage and that Christians should create their own sacred writings.[1] But the men who wrote the books that were later included in the New Testament were unanimous in their high regard for the Old Testament. They claimed that they understood it better than its official interpreters, and that it clearly looked forward to fulfillment in Christ. Luke's allusions to the validity of the Law and the Prophets, even in the minutest details (vs. 17), and to the blindness of the typical Jew to the teachings that were so plain to Christians (vs. 31) were a part of this effort of Christian leaders to claim the Old Testament for the Church.

Paul had said that the resurrection of Jesus was God's way of declaring unmistakably who Jesus was (Rom. 1:4). But this declaration had not been as impressive in Jewish as in Gentile circles, and as time passed Christian leaders became increasingly skeptical of the likelihood of Jewish "belief." When Luke wrote, the resurrection of Jesus had failed to effect the conversion

[1] Toward the middle of the second century Marcion proposed Luke's Gospel and ten letters of Paul as a Christian substitute for the Old Testament.

of the Jews, and the Synagogue and the Church had become thoroughly antagonistic.

The ineffectiveness of the resurrection in the instance of the Jews by no means proved its needlessness or ineffectiveness in general. It had been tremendously effective for the conversion of Gentiles, for whom all of the books that compose the New Testament were written. Its effectiveness for non-Jews was taken to be convincing proof of the blameworthiness of the Jew for his non-belief, especially since Christians insisted that Moses and the prophets told of it in advance. The Fourth Gospel, written not more than a decade later than Luke-Acts and almost certainly with Luke's parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in mind, tells the story of the raising of Lazarus (11:43-53). Instead of converting those who witnessed this miracle, it actually incited them to make a plot against Jesus' life (vs. 53). It was this disbelief in the resurrection of Jesus and Christian pessimism about making the meaning of the Old Testament clear to Jews that Luke had in mind in his report of Abraham's refusal of the rich man's petition, "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!"

Nowhere in the parable are any moral differences between the rich man and Lazarus described. Lazarus at the gate, unattended and in dire need, while the rich man lives in ease and plenty implies gross unbrotherliness on the part of the latter, but it says nothing of the deserving or righteous character of the former.

The rich man is described as dressed and fed and housed in ways that fitted his circumstances. His is a perfect picture of worldly plenty and security. He has everything he needs, and he finds satisfaction in the things that material wealth can provide. His concern is with his possessions and their use for his personal

enjoyment, and he manifests no interest in other directions. He is a worldly-minded man, probably highly respected, and by usual standards a leading citizen of his community. But his morality and social standards are not those of the Kingdom of God.

The story does not say that the rich man knew that Lazarus lay at his gate. He may or may not have known. If he knew it, his sin was that of inhumanity. If he was completely unaware of Lazarus, his sin was that of well insulated self-centeredness, conscious only of the world about him in terms of its exploitation for his own gain.

Lazarus was "a beggar" whose friends probably put him down near the rich man's gate each day. He was "covered with sores," perhaps as a result of filth and malnutrition, and was desperately hungry. He was glad to share with the dogs the waste food from the rich man's table. The dogs that "came and licked his sores" were an annoyance rather than an aid to him, and they are intended in the parable to emphasize the man's isolation and helplessness. Lazarus never speaks in the parable, and his silence is an effective detail of the picture. His is the inarticulateness of the desperately poor. He sees no remedy in "the present age" for his condition and so is dumbly resigned to his earthly circumstances. For the teaching values of the story, Lazarus is not the significant character. He furnishes background for the delineation of the character of the rich man. It is the rich man on whom the story focuses attention.

Table napkins were not used in antiquity. People usually ate with their hands and then cleaned them by wiping them on a piece of bread. This waste bread was probably "what was thrown away" and what Lazarus and the dogs eagerly devoured.

When death comes to these two men everything is changed. The beggar "was carried away by the angels to the companionship of Abraham," but the rich man simply "died and was buried." An appropriate funeral was the last of the good things of "the present age" that he could have as a result of being rich. Beyond the grave waited Hades. The parable gives no clear account of why the rich man deserved his fate. It leaves the matter entirely to inference. His heartlessness, as evidenced in the unrelieved plight of Lazarus, may have been the explanation. Or it may be that the story intended to show that the awards of the world are all undeserved, both of wealth and of poverty, and so require reversal by God. On such an explanation, the "rich," as in the Epistle of James (2:2-8), would be regarded as the natural enemies of God and therefore, as "sons of this age," the objects of his "wrath."

Usually, in Jewish and early Christian eschatology, the spirits of all who died went to Hades or Sheol, there to wait for the resurrection and judgment and the assignment to eternal destinies. Paul regarded the resurrection of Jesus "from the dead" as an exception, and its exceptional character was God's way of declaring him unmistakably as the Messiah (Rom. 1:4,5). A few others, like Abraham and Elijah and Moses had been specially favored by being taken immediately to God's abode. It may be that in this parable Hades is thought of as divided into paradise and a place of torment and as furnishing an intermediate waiting place for both the righteous and the sinners. It is equally possible, however, that the thought is of a judgment that follows immediately upon death and of eternal destinies as immediately assigned. However the case may be, Lazarus is where Abraham abides and the rich man is excluded as having never been a true son of Abraham.

A social "chasm" separated these men during their earthly existence. It could have been crossed, at least from the side of the rich man. Failure to cross that man-made chasm placed these men in the spirit world on opposite sides of a God-determined chasm, so that even "those who want to go over . . . cannot." [2]

This story, as Jesus used it, probably had an emphasis very similar to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The rich man was as oblivious as the Samaritan was sensitive to the desperate plight of another man. Social conventions required neither to exercise himself to administer relief. The rich man fitted smugly into those conventions as though they were the ordinances of God and as though religion involved no humane implications, whereas the Samaritan spontaneously acted as a "neighbor" and so as religious, however he defined or failed to define his deed.

The religious character of Jesus' teaching led to his insistence that each man has duties with reference to other people irrespective of the duties or behavior of these people. Each man is to act like God acts whether the other person or persons with whom he deals act that way or not. The beggar at the rich man's gate focuses attention on the rich man and how he will proceed. No effort is made to deal with the two men at once, but merely to see how blind and calloused the rich man was. There is no discussion of the beggar's rights, or of the social implications of his plight. Jesus characteristically looks at and is concerned with the actor in the scene. It is the "inaction" of the rich man that constitutes the action of the present story, and the

[2] The apocryphal Apocalypse of Peter illustrates the most vivid and imaginative representation of destinies after death in early Christian literature. Jesus' allusions are characterized by great reserve and avoidance of detail.

purpose of the story as Jesus used it was to make such inaction unforgettably ugly and repulsive.

There was no thought on Jesus' part of saying that the administration of "first aid" in the case of the Good Samaritan exhausted the meaning of religion. Similarly, his intention in the present parable was not to say that if the rich man had bestowed on Lazarus in equal amount with his own food and clothing and a home that God's will would have been completely realized. His thought was rather that every man's duty to God will involve alertness in life situations as he is involved in them and that he will do in such situations whatever seems to express God's love in view of the facts as they appear.

THE BONDSERVANT

LUKE 17:7-10

"What man among you, if he has a servant ploughing or keeping sheep, will say to him when he comes in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at the table,' instead of saying to him, 'Get my supper ready, and dress yourself, and wait on me while I eat and drink, and you can eat and drink afterward'? Is he grateful to the slave for doing what he has been ordered to do? So you also, when you do all you have been ordered to do, must say, 'We are good-for-nothing slaves! We have done only what we ought to have done!"

THE PARABLE OF THE BONDSEVANT IS PECULIAR TO LUKE'S Gospel. The elaborate and somewhat obscure setting of the parable (vss. 1-6), however, is created out of materials that have parallels in Matthew and Mark, though in scattered contexts: verse 1 in Matthew 18:7; verse 2 in Matthew 18:6 and Mark 9:42; verse 3 in Matthew 18:15; verse 4 in Matthew 18:21,22; verse 6 in Matthew 17:20*b* (cf. Matt. 21:21) and Mark 11:22,23.

The idea that seems to give unity to this collection of sayings and to relate the parable to the entire chapter as its context is expressed in the prayer of the apostles (vs. 5), "Give us more faith." The petition, like the parable, is found only in Luke and discloses the point of the parable as a part of the evangelist's message. The necessity and the adequacy of faith in times of trial and perplexity is the theme that is developed. Faith that will sustain the disciple in such times will be characterized by reality and vitality rather than by quantity. Followers of Jesus do not need an "increase" of faith so much as an understanding of it in terms of what it will inherently cause them to do. Where it exists at all it will have the characteristic of power in it such as would be sufficient to uproot a "mulberry tree."

Paul had described himself (Rom. 1:5) as "commissioned" by God "to urge obedience and faith upon all the heathen." This conception of faith as resulting in

obedience and of Christian obedience as the outgrowth of faith gave moral substance without the deadness of legalism to Christian living as Paul understood it. It was to "faith-obedience," or obedience that is the outcome of faith, that he called men. It is a similar view of faith that Luke urges. The slave obeys his master, even though weary and already overtaxed from a day in the field, and he does not lack for food and drink. The ten lepers obeyed Jesus, although his command seemed so largely without point, and they were all cured. Obedience to the Master as the mark of the true disciple and as the one sure way to the Kingdom, whatever the uncertainty of the times and the trials that may attend, was Luke's exhortation to followers of Jesus in his own time.

Luke represents the parable of the Bondservant as addressed to the disciples (vss. 1,5). They were not slave owners, but the imagery of the parable mattered less to the evangelist than the message he had in mind. His problem was that of maintaining morale against the discouragements of persecution, the disappointment of many at the delay of Jesus' return, the difficulties of being governed by the ethical ideals of Christianity in a world so hostile to them. The tendency, as with those to whom the author of Hebrews addressed his message, was to lapse into apathy. They could not but question the worthwhileness of the Christian life in view of its hardships and the failure or undue delay of many of its expectations. Luke urged that obedience to Christ would bring certainty and joy and ultimate security. The true disciple would find satisfaction in service, not in escape from it. He could obey whether he fully understood or not, and he could be assured of God's approval on the basis of the faith that his obedience evidenced.

The question that introduces the parable (vs. 7) may originally have been addressed to an audience in which there were well-to-do persons who owned slaves. It may have been, however—and certainly is in the setting in which the parable is given—merely a rhetorical question and have referred to a social convention with which all would be familiar. No particular masters are in mind, but merely any master of the usual type. Such a master is neither moral nor socially minded in acting as he is described in the story; he merely acts in the customary way.

Similarly, the slave behaves like a slave society would require him to do. He is wholly at the disposal of his master. He obeys uncritically what he is told to do. He has no will of his own. The treatment he receives is that determined by his status rather than his welfare. A master was entitled by right to whatever the slave was capable of doing. The slave's best was simply his duty.

The statement (vs. 9), "And you can eat and drink afterward," may have placed intentional emphasis on the principle of reward and had the effect of counseling patience. More probably it was simply a detail of the framework of the story with no particular meaning to be attached to it.

The further question (vs. 9), "Is he grateful to the slave for doing what he has been ordered to do?" has to do with the accumulation of special merit. If by doing his duty a slave acquires a claim on his master's favor, confusion is introduced into the relationship and the rights of ownership are qualified. In a slave society, a master would be entitled to the best performance within the slave's power, so that special merit could not exist.

There are two possibilities in the matter of the closing exhortation (vs. 10): The usual reading is, "So you also

. . . must say, 'We are good-for-nothing slaves!' " The Sinaitic Syriac Version,[1] on the other hand, omits the adjective and reads simply, "We are slaves!" removing the emphasis on a kind of slave and leaving it, where it probably belongs, on the slave relationship and the obligations that went with it.

Neither in the intention of Jesus nor in the use of the parable made by Luke does the story represent God's way of dealing with men. The spirit of the religious man is the whole point. The thought is that man can never exceed what he ought to be and do in view of the debt under which God's love places him. The single point at which the parable applies to the relation of man and God is that God's will is supreme for the godly man and the godly man is tireless in his performance of it. The remainder of the imagery in which obedience is to command based on ownership falls entirely aside, and in its stead there is the gladness and congeniality of sonship where obedience takes on the character of co-operation. Obedience then becomes more thorough and effort more sacrificial because love takes the place of coercion and recognizes no limits save those of ability and opportunity.

[1] A manuscript of the fourth or fifth century, discovered by the Misses Lewis at the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai in 1892.

THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW

LUKE 18:1-8

He gave them an illustration to show that they must always pray and not give up, and he said,

"There was once in a city a judge who had no fear of God and no respect for men. There was a widow in the city and she came to him and said, 'Protect me from my opponent.' And he would not for a time, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God nor respect for men, yet because this widow bothers me, I will protect her, so that she may not finally wear me out with her coming.'"

And the Master said,

"Listen to what this dishonest judge said! Then will not God provide protection for his chosen people, who cry out to him day and night? Is he slow to help them? I tell you, he will make haste to provide it! But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

THE PARABLES OF THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW (vss. 1-8) and the Pharisee and the Publican (vss. 9-14) are a continuation of the evangelist's discussion (chap. 17) of Christian faith in troubled times. The chapter division, coming where it does, obscures this connection. The thought sequence is made clear when the petition for an increase of faith (17:5) is interpreted against a background of persecution so terrible and circumstances so baffling as to make it doubtful whether "when the Son of Man comes" he will "find faith on earth" (18:8).

The earliest Christian creed had been the confession, "Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 10:9; cf. I Cor. 9:6). The corollary of this confession was "obedience" on the part of a disciple. Luke has similarly made obedience the primary expression of a true disciple's faith. He has insisted that faith "increases" in being used, and that even though strength is sorely tried and understanding of circumstances is confused, the disciple will be steadfastly obedient to Christ. The "faith-obedience" of the disciple, however, cannot be wholly a matter of his own resolution. It is related to a vital religious fellowship that exists in and is sustained by prayer. It is in illus-

tration of the function of prayer that the parable of the Importunate Widow fits into the Lukan sermon.

The original story is probably limited to verses 2 through 5. The application of the story for Luke and for his hearers appears in the editorial additions, verses 1, and 6 through 8. The editorial comment reflects neither the spirit nor the times of Jesus, but rather a persecution situation in which the faith of disciples is so severely tested as to make the survival of the Christian movement doubtful unless the parousia comes speedily. Christians are to steady themselves by their expectation of the speedy return of Jesus; and they are to pray constantly for the intervention of the Divine Judge, who alone can save Christians from their terrible lot.

The voice of a contemporary of the evangelist serves as an introduction to the spirit and application of the parable as it is here presented. From "underneath the altar" the author of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:9-11) has "those who have been slaughtered on account of God's message and for adhering to the testimony" cry out: "Holy and true Master, how long is it to be before you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" They are told "to be quiet a little while longer, until the number of their fellow-slaves and their brothers, who were to be killed as they had been, should be complete." Similarly for the evangelist the "day when the Son of Man appears" (Luke 17:22,30) is a certainty, and Christians may rely on it as the time of their vindication. In the meantime, they will not interpret God's delay as meaning that they are forgotten or forsaken.

The delay of the coming of the Messiah is explained by another perplexed leader as intended to afford an adequate opportunity for all men to repent (II Pet. 3:1-13):

"First of all, you must understand this, that in the last days mockers will come . . . saying, 'Where is his promised coming?' . . . But do not overlook this one fact, dear friends, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, in the sense that some men think; he is really showing his patience with you, because he does not want any to perish, but wishes all men to be brought to repentance. The Day of the Lord will come like a thief; on it the heavens will pass away with a roar, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth and all its works will melt away. If all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what holy and pious lives you ought to lead, while you await and hasten the coming of the Day of God. . . . In fulfilment of his promise we expect new heavens and a new earth, where uprightness will prevail."

Prayer as a resource for those who "await" and desire to "hasten the coming of the Day of God" is Luke's emphasis in his report of the parable of the Importunate Widow. Perseverance is the quality that is illustrated by the parable because it is the point at which Christians of Luke's own times are apt to fail. The point of similarity that he sees between the judge in the story and God is that each is moved by unceasing petition.

There is also a word of warning with the evangelist's word of reassurance. Readiness to measure up to the demands of the Day must accompany their eagerness for its coming. It is right that they should "always pray" for the parousia, but they are to remember that the Day will be a testing time and that those who desire it for the sake of its blessings must be sure of their own fitness. There is absolute certainty of the promises of God (vs. 8*a*), but there is question (vs. 8*b*) about man's fidelity, which gives the exhortation something

of the ethical flavor of prophetic warnings (cf. Amos 5:18-27; Mal. 2:17; 3:1-5).

In the earlier part of the discourse (17:1,20), Jesus is represented as speaking alternately to his own disciples and to the Pharisees. He is presumably speaking to the disciples in the present instance (vs. 1), since the Pharisees are rather clearly his audience (vs. 9) in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

In a persecution situation, less trying because less systematic and prolonged, Paul had counseled Thessalonian disciples (I Thess. 5:17):

"Be patient with everybody. Take care that none of you ever pays back evil for evil, but always try to treat one another and everybody with kindness. Always be joyful. Never give up praying. Thank God whatever happens. For that is what God through Christ Jesus wants you to do."

Luke's message (vs. 1) is substantially the same when he urges that "they must always pray and not give up," except that it is, perhaps, more specifically eschatological (vss. 6-8).

The imagery of the parable is substantially that of an earlier Jewish teacher, and Jesus probably knew the thought in its earlier expression (Ecclus. 35:14-18):

"He will not disregard the supplication of the orphan,
Or the widow, if she pours out her story.
Do not the widow's tears run down her cheeks,
While she utters her complaint against the man who has caused them to fall?
The man who serves God with good will is welcomed,
And his prayer reaches to the clouds.
The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds,
And until it reaches God, he will not be consoled.
He will not leave off until the Most High considers him,
And does justice to the upright, and passes judgment."

The widow of the parable with her confident prayer for justice gives greater vividness to the timeless message of God's responsiveness and righteousness.

Arrangements for the administration of justice in Palestine are not entirely clear. There were probably local courts of some description (Jos. Wars II,xiv,1; Matt. 5:22; Mark 13:9), but their composition and procedure are not clear (Jos. Antiq. IV,viii,14; Wars II,xx,5). The allusion in the parable may have been purely ideal, however, with no specific reference to the legal machinery of the times. The judge could have been an appointee of Antipas, or he may have been an influential citizen of the locality. Whether an actual type or not, he is represented for the purposes of the story as calloused and venal, having "no fear of God nor respect for men" (vs. 5).

The "widow" was the popular symbol of defenselessness (cf Ecclus. 35:14-19). The justice of her cause and the righteousness of God were her only reliance. Influence and wealth were not among her resources. In the story, she is distinguished for her persistence and is described as literally "wearing out" a calloused and cynical official.

The story says nothing of the justice of the "widow's" case. She regards her cause as legitimate and feels that she has been the victim of oppression. She desires the kind of protection that vindication would guarantee. Her plea is, "Vindicate my right, and by this means protect me from my oppressor." Annoyance rather than concern for justice moved the judge. Her perpetual coming "got on his nerves," and he finally did his duty.

The point of similarity between the judge and God (vs. 7) is in their being moved by unceasing petition. At every point except this one, dissimilarity and outright contrast would be taken for granted. God's pro-

vision of protection for those who "always pray" is eschatological, but the intervention of the Divine Judge is regarded as sufficiently near to enable the beneficiaries of his justice to bear their immediate trials (vs. 8).

It is not merely "faith" as an act of self-commitment by an individual whose continuance until the parousia is problematical (vs. 8*b*). It is "the faith." The phrase is used only this one time in the Synoptic Gospels. Its other occurrences in the New Testament are in the Pastoral and Catholic letters (I Tim. 4:1; 5:8; 6:10,21: II Tim. 1:5; 2:18; 3:8; 4:7; Tit. 1:1; Jas. 2:14ff.; Jude 3; 20). It usually refers to a body of belief regarded as more or less authoritative. It may be that for the evangelist "the faith" that alone could create endurance and perseverance was belief in Jesus as Messiah and in the certainty of his early return to judge the world. The weakening of that confidence might even jeopardize the continued existence of the Christian movement. He would hope that persecution might operate to create a type of patience (Rom. 5: 3,4; 8:25; Col. 1:11; Matt. 10:23), however, that would not only maintain faith but that would even convert the oppressor.

Jesus' own prayer life was an expression of his trustful, filial attitude toward God. It was never a device for informing God or for bringing God around to his own way. It was rather a coveted opportunity for discovering what God's will was for him.

Jesus spent long periods in prayer, but never with the thought that sheer ceaselessness was effective (cf. Matt. 6:7). Rather, his thought was that God knew the needs of every man before they were ever voiced. He prayed both because it was his pleasure to commune with his Father and because it enabled him more completely to make God's will his own. He made every felt need and every real interest of his life an occasion

and subject for prayer. Facing a crisis, fatigued by a day's work, tried by the frailties of his associates, perplexed when his efforts bore disappointing results, burdened by responsibility, Jesus renewed his spirit in prayer.

Prayer was a more significant thing with Jesus than meditation. It was not just a "quiet time." It was personal intercourse. It was fellowship with a God who heard and responded. It was definitely two-sided. It had all of the values of stimulating social relationship. He was confident that every prayer he or anyone else uttered, was heard and, in God's infinite wisdom, answered.

The story of the widow who exhaused a conscienceless judge by her persistence would serve Jesus only by means of its extreme contrasts with what he took to be the relationships of the humble and helpless to God. His point probably was that if she could so annoy such a judge by keeping her cause constantly before him, that God with every detail of creation constantly and vividly a part of his consciousness would without persuasion do all for the least of his children that they would receive. It would not be the ceaselesness of the widow's asking so much as the responsiveness of God to the felt needs of the helpless and humble that the story illustrated. A God who noted the sparrow's fall, to whom the guardian angels of all little children "have continual access" (Matt. 8:10), who set high value on every aspiration after holiness, would never be inattentive to prayer, by whomsoever offered.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

LUKE 18:9-14

To some who were confident of their own uprightness, and thought nothing of others, he used this illustration:

"Two men went up to the Temple to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. The Pharisee stood up and uttered this prayer to himself: 'O God, I thank you that I am not like other men, greedy, dishonest, or adulterous, like that tax-collector. I fast two days in the week; I pay tithes on everything I get.' But the tax-collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast, and said, 'O God, have mercy on a sinner like me!' I tell you, it was he who went back to his house with God's approval, and not the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the man who humbles himself will be exalted."

THE CONNECTION OF THIS PARABLE WITH ITS CONTEXT IS entirely a thought connection. It is clearly a continuation of the evangelists's treatment of faith. The parable of the Importunate Widow closed with the warning that fitness must accompany eagerness for the coming of the Son of Man (vs. 8). The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican makes the meaning of fitness explicit by illustrating the kind of faith that results in "justification" (vs. 14). The representation of fitness is further developed in the succeeding dialogue between "a member of the council" and Jesus (vss. 19-27) in which two conceptions of what God approves are compared.

The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is ostensibly addressed to the Pharisees (cf. 17:20). Failure to name them definitely (vs. 9) may mean that Luke used them representatively and that he was actually correcting in Christians certain misconceptions popularly attributed to Pharisees. Paul was aware of the dangers of presumption for Christians (Rom. 11:13-22), and Luke had an equally definite reason for applying his message as he did.

Justification for Paul meant that God deals with a man as though he were actually righteous in advance of

his achievement of righteousness, except insofar as it is implicit in faith. Faith is the basis of God's approval because it affects the will and consists in utterly sincere self-surrender to God. It is ethically significant because it has in it the promise of growth. It involves an honest appraisal of a man's existing condition with a firm resolution from that point onward to acknowledge God's absolute sovereignty. That seems to be the point of the parable for Luke. The publican has not misrepresented himself. There is no pretense in his humility. He is the sinner that he says he is. He goes "back to his house with God's approval" (vs. 14), because he throws himself on God's mercy. God forgives him as the father forgave the prodigal. There is hope for him because he sees himself as he is, senses his unworthiness, and aspires to be a true son of God. His fitness consists in his sincere aspiration after a better life than he has known.

Whoever they were, the respresentation of those for whom the parable was intended as "confident of their own uprightness" and as thinking "nothing of others" (vs. 9) is a perfect picture of complacent pride. Their irritating self-assurance is heightened by their attitude of contempt for all who fail to conform to their own type. Their confidence is open to question because they have no sufficiently worthy standard by which to test their estimate of themselves.

Standing was the normal posture in public worship. Both men in the parable stood, the Pharisee confidently and conspicuously among the others who were in the Temple, the publican at a distance as though less worthy than others to come into the divine presence. The lifting of the eyes to heaven was similarly natural and proper when men prayed, but the publican "would not even raise his eyes to heaven" (vs. 13). He claims

nothing on a basis of merit or as a right, but stands as a needy suppliant.

The prayer of the Pharisee (vs. 11) is addressed to God, not to himself. The statement that he "uttered this prayer to himself" means that he prayed silently instead of aloud. But the content of his prayer gives it the character of self-eulogy. God is hardly in his consciousness at all. Petition and confession have no place in what he says. He congratulates God for having at least one respectable devotee and by implication commiserates him for having to be bothered by such hangers-on as the publican.

The Mosaic Law enjoined one fast, that of the Day of Atonement. Later custom established other fasts in commemoration of national crises. Special fasts were authorized when occasion arose, and these were observed on Mondays and Thursdays. Individuals might elect to fast at any time they chose, and the extremely strict Pharisees fasted on Monday and Thursday throughout the year. The Pharisee in the parable was that extreme in his schedule of fasting. In tithing, he met a similarly strict standard. By the tests with which he was familiar, his righteousness was of a supereminent character. But it was his very piety that made him insensitive to God's approach and will because it involved contempt for other men.

With Jesus, prayer was the most profoundly revealing act of human beings. There, if anywhere, a man appeared in his true character. Whether he intended it or not, the secrets of his heart came to the surface and the things that mattered most to him were brought into high relief. For a man to pray was for him to stand before God and be judged. It was to represent prayer as having such meanings that Jesus used the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

The only norm for righteousness that religion can recognize is God's own conduct and character. Religion is human aspiration after godlikeness. There is a sense in which it is true to maintain that Jesus had no ethical and social message. His only interest was religion, but religion for him involved certain ethical and social attitudes, and access to God was conditioned by righteousness.

The righteousness of the Pharisee in the parable turns out to be mere "respectability." Instead of the will of God, social approval is the real standard that he accepts. He exonerates himself of wrongdoing at those points where any different behavior would have involved social penalties: greed, dishonesty, adultery. His righteousness is that of conformity to traditional standards and utterly lacks the qualities of spontaneity and creativity. He uses the forms and verbiage of religion, but he is more keenly conscious of the other people in the Temple than of God. By his use of this parable, Jesus reproved the same error in religion that Paul discovered among his Corinthian converts (II Cor. 10:12f.):

"I do not indeed venture to class or compare myself with certain individuals who approve themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they do not show good sense. . . . Let the man who boasts, boast about the Lord. For it is not the man who approves of himself who is really approved; it is the man of whom the Lord approves."

Jesus made pride the essential meaning of irreligion because it resulted from selfcomparison with worldly standards. Religion, in his estimation, invariably created humility because it involved self-comparison with God. It is because he stood in the presence of God and was overwhelmed by his moral majesty that the

publican's only prayer was, "O God, have mercy on a sinner like me!"

Jesus had no intention of teaching by this parable that a consciousness of freedom from sin was inherently bad. He intended merely to condemn it when it lacked sufficient solidity. He thought that men could and should require of themselves that their motives be absolutely sincere and their behavior disinterested. And yet, as he seems to say in the immediately succeeding context (Luke 18:19; cf. Mark 10:18 and Matt. 19:17), every finite person will realize his shortcomings in the sense that his goodness is in process of being realized, whereas the goodness of God is not in a state of development but exists in absolute perfection.

The virtue of the publican lies in his acute sense of need. He sees his own unworthiness clearly because he stands in the presence of God. He has the quality that is commended in the first Beatitude (Matt. 5:3); he feels his "spiritual need," and because he does "the Kingdom of Heaven belongs" to him. It is this single quality that is commended by Jesus, and it goes without saying that he might have had it without having been a publican. There were Pharisees who in the estimation of Jesus enjoyed God's approval. The imagery of the story, however, served to make the distinctions doubly vivid.

THE LABORERS AND THE HOURS

MATTHEW 20:1-16

"For the Kingdom of Heaven is like an employer who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. He agreed with the laborers to pay them a dollar a day, and sent them to his vineyard. He went out about nine o'clock and saw others standing in the bazaar with nothing to do. And he said to them, 'You go to my vineyard, too, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. He went out again about twelve and about three, and did the same. About five he went out and found others standing about and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing about here all day doing nothing?' They said to him, 'Because nobody has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go to my vineyard, too.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last and ending with the first.' When those who were hired about five o'clock came they received a dollar apiece. And when those who were hired first came they expected to get more, but they too got a dollar apiece. And when they received it they grumbled at their employer, and said, 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour, and you have put them on the same footing with us who have done the heavy work of the day and have stood the midday heat.' But he answered one of them, 'My friend, I am doing you no injustice. Did you not agree with me on a dollar? Take what belongs to you and go. I wish to give the last man hired as much as I give you. Have I no right to do what I please with what is mine? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last."

THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS AND THE HOURS occurs in Matthew only. The author probably drew it from his M source. The setting in which he presents it is a series of incidents that is paralleled in Mark and Luke and that has substantially the same meaning for them that it has for him. Our evangelist has simply enriched the message of the Markan context and given it some sharpened applications by his introduction of the parable.

Matthew follows Mark in giving the story of the Rich Ruler (Mark 10:17-25; Luke 18:18-27), in telling of Peter's reminder of the sacrifices of the disciples (Mark 10:28-30; Luke 18:28-30), and in pointing the moral of these stories by the adage, "But many who are first now

will be last then, and the last will be first" (Mark 10:31; cf. Luke 13:30). At that point in the Markan framework he tells the story of the Laborers and the Hours, indicating the application of it that he had in mind by a repetition of the proverbial saying regarding the reversal of worldly judgments in the Kingdom (20:16). Immediately thereafter, he resumes his Markan source.

The evangelist closed his account of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (19:1) with a discourse based on the question of the disciples, "Who is really greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" (18:1). That the disciples of that day failed to get the point and that disciples in Matthew's day needed further emphasis on the message is shown by the story of the worldly ambition of Zebedee's sons and the incriminating jealousy of "the other ten" when they heard about it (20:20-24). Accordingly, Jesus is represented as continuing to discuss the meaning of greatness throughout the journey through Perea (chaps. 19 and 20). The treatment of that theme is given a specific turn by using the saying (19:30 and 20:16) about the divine reversal of worldly judgments. The discourse is brought to its climax in the description of real greatness in terms of humble service such as was exemplified in the sacrificial life and death of the Son of Man (20:25-28).

A subsidiary purpose of Matthew's Gospel was to assert Jewish unworthiness because of the crucifixion of Jesus and to show that the Gentiles had thereby become the beneficiaries of God's promises. Matthew wrote for a definitely non-Jewish public, and his message had a more strongly anti-Jewish bias than any other New Testament writing with the possible exception of the Fourth Gospel. The parable of the Laborers and the Hours was probably intended by the evangelist as a

strengthening of his indictment of those to whom Jesus first proclaimed the Gospel. It is worth noting that immediately after the parable there is an allusion to Jesus' rejection and death in Jerusalem and that entire responsibility is placed on "the high priests and scribes" rather than on Roman provincial officials (vss. 18,19).

Here as elsewhere, however, the evangelistic takes precedence over the polemical interest. The men who wrote the books that became the New Testament were first of all interested in making converts to Christ and in stimulating and sustaining Christian faith. They were proclaimers of a message in which they ardently believed, not merely the historians of a movement that they viewed with an outsider's critical objectivity. The first evangelist used this parable to encourage Christians who might suffer the contempt of the world with the promise of heavenly rewards. What they might suffer in the present age for the sake of the Gospel was as "refuse" when compared with the glories in "the coming age." The parable is prefaced by Peter's reminder of the sacrifices made by the disciples and by the glowing description of their future recognition (19:27-30):

> "In the new world, I tell you, when the Son of Man takes his seat on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit upon twelve thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel! And anyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or land for my sake will receive many times as much, and share eternal life. But many who are first now will be last then, and many who are now last will be first."

The parable was further used to stir the enthusiasm of Christian missionaries. For the evangelist, the "vineyard" represented the Church. The tasks that were immediate and the responsibilities of its leaders were as

important and as imperative as any of the early days. They might even transcend them, in view of the imminence of the end of the age and the inauguration of the Kingdom. Those who wrought mightily in the past had not pre-empted all of the rewards of service. To sit on the right and left of the king might as yet be undetermined and conceivably might be destined for some humble disciple known only to the Father (vs. 23). God's appraisals are expressions of his grace; and all who labor willingly, however humbly, are under his watchful eye. Nothing escapes the Father's notice; and the Judgment, so close at hand, will disclose the justice of his grace and love.

The ruggedness of Palestine made the vineyard the central feature of Jewish agriculture. Familiarity with this feature of the agricultural economy of their land supplied Old Testament writers with much of their most popular imagery. Israel was God's vineyard, and the divine providence was symbolized in the painstaking care of a husbandman. Similarly, his displeasure was represented in the desolation and ruin that resulted from a keeper's slothfulness and irresponsibility (Isa. 1:8; 5:1-7; Jer. 12:10; Prov. 24:30; and in the New Testament, I Cor. 9:7; Matt. 21:28,32; Luke 13:6).

The men who were employed by the vineyard owner in the story were laborers who worked for a daily wage. They presented themselves where prospective employers would seek for them. They were not idle in a sense that was blameworthy, but were unemployed because of a lack of opportunity (vs. 7). They were free men in the sense that they were not slaves and could sell their services for hire, but in the larger sense of being able to choose work in terms of desirability and meaning they were not free. They had to take what was offered both in compensation and nature of work. That aspect of

the matter, however, is merely a part of the framework and is in no sense the teaching point of the parable.

Five groups of workers are mentioned. The first group was hired in the early morning at a dollar for the day (vs. 2). At nine o'clock, a second group was employed with the rate of pay indicated as "whatever is right" (vs. 4). The third and fourth groups are sent to work respectively at noon and at three in the afternoon and on the same basis of compensation as the second group (vs. 5). Those hired, finanally, at five o'clock in the afternoon had no agreed-upon basis of employment, but were simply told, "You go to my vineyard, too" (vs. 7). No legitimate emphasis can be given any of these details. They do disclose the plight of the wage earner in antiquity where in competition with slave labor his condition was precarious and even desperate, but that is incidental. The materials of the story are drawn from life as it was; but the portrayal of life as disclosed in these details is not the concern of the teacher, whether Jesus or the evangelist.

Those who "grumbled" (vs. 11) did so not because of the refusal of the employer to pay the wage agreed on but because those who started at five in the afternoon were paid a dollar just as they were who began work at six in the morning. Viewed from the angle of labor policy, their grumbling was amply justified. But this is another detail drawn from practices utterly indefensible, and not here defended, and serving simply as a part of the natural imagery of the story.

The reply of the employer to those who grumbled (vs. 15) would constitute a serious problem if it were taken as the teaching of the story: "Have I no right to do what I please with what is mine?" The New Testament teaching is regularly that the ownership of wealth is never absolute. Life itself is a trust, and a man is

responsible to God for all that it represents. Even if the reference were to God, it would have to be said that a grave moral problem was involved. Paul had to face the problem of God's morality if the divine omnipotence is taken to mean sheer almightiness, and his solution in terms of predestinarianism (Rom. 9:14-33) has created difficulties throughout Christian history. Here again, however, it is a detail of the story that is involved and not the main teaching.

The real point of the parable and the emphasis that it served in Jesus' own message is that divine approval is completely non-legal. There is inevitably wide difference between persons on any sort of achievement basis, but among those who within the limits of ability and opportunity are utterly devoted to their tasks there is equality in the realm of spirit. The thing commended in the parable is this readiness of response to opportunity and a corresponding zeal for service thereafter. Whether the opportunity to work came early or late, all answered wholeheartedly and labored earnestly.

Jesus was aware of the fact of difference among persons. He knew that each person could be and do something distinctive. He desired that none be imitators of others. He felt that God was best served, not by deadening conformity to a set standard, however lofty and worth-while in itself. He valued the vitality that emerges out of variety, and he respected variety in the interest of creativeness and spontaneity. The only test that he could conceive of God making was that each man do his best in terms of opportunity and capacity. This parable was intended to teach simply that nowhere does God demand uniformity save in the realm of motive and spiritual quality, and that however widely circumstances and opportunities vary, producing as

they do differences in outward accomplishment, there may be oneness in spirit. It is this essential idea that Paul expressed in his doctrine of justification by faith. The beauty of statement given the truth in this parable marks it as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of all the stories preserved in the Gospels.

ENTRUSTED WEALTH

LUKE 19:11-28

As they were listening to this, Jesus went on to give them an illustration, because he was near Jerusalem and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was immediately going to appear. So he said, "A nobleman once went to a distant country to secure his appointment to a kingdom and then return. And he called in ten of his slaves and gave them each twenty dollars and told them to trade with it while he was gone. But his countrymen hated him, and they sent a delegation after him to say, 'We do not want this man made king over us.' And when he had secured the appointment and returned, he ordered the slaves to whom he had given the money to be called in, so that he could find out how much they had made. The first one came in and said, 'Your twenty dollars has made two hundred, sir!" And he said to him, 'Well done, my excellent slave! You have proved trustworthy about a very small amount, you shall be governor of ten towns.' The second came in and said, 'Your twenty dollars has made a hundred, sir!' And he said to him, "And you shall be governor of five towns!' And the other one came in and said, 'Here is your twenty dollars, sir. I have kept it put away in a handkerchief, for I was afraid of you, for you are a stern man. You pick up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will convict you, you wretched slave! You knew, did you, that I was a stern man, and that I pick up what I did not lay down, and harvest what I did not sow? Then why did you not put my money in the bank, so that when I came back I could have gotten it with interest?' And he said to the bystanders, 'Take the twenty dollars away from him, and give it to the man who has the two hundred!' They said to him, 'He has two hundred, sir!'—'I tell you, the man who has will have more given him, and from the man who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away! But bring those enemies of mine here who did not want me made king over them, and slaughter them in my presence!' " With these words he went on ahead of them, on his way to Jerusalem.

MATTHEW 25:14-30

"For it is just like a man who was going on a journey, and called in his slaves, and put his property in their hands. He gave one five thousand dollars, and another two thousand, and another one thousand; to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The man who had received the five thousand dollars immediately went into business with the money, and made five thousand more. In the same way the man who had received the two thousand made two thousand more. But the man who had received the one thousand went away and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Long afterward, their master came back and settled accounts with them. And the man who had received the five thousand dollars came up bringing him five thousand more, and said, 'Sir, you put five thousand dollars in my hands; here I have made five thousand more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my excellent, faithful slave! you have been

faithful about a small amount; I will put a large one into your hands. Come, share your master's enjoyment!' And the man who had received the two thousand came up and said, 'Sir, you put two thousand dollars into my hand; here I have made two thousand more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my excellent, faithful slave! you have been faithful about a small amount; I will put a large one into your hands. Come! share your master's enjoyment.' And the man who had received the one thousand came up and said, 'Sir, I knew you were a hard man, who reaped where you had not sown, and gathered where you had not threshed, and I was frightened, and I went and hid your thousand dollars in the ground. Here is your money!' His master answered, 'You wicked, idle slave! You knew that I reaped where I had not sown and gathered where I had not threshed? Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and then when I came back I would have gotten my property with interest. So take the thousand dollars away from him, and give it to the man who has the ten thousand, for the man who has will have more given him, and will be plentifully supplied, and from the man who has nothing even what he has will be taken away. And put the good-for-nothing slave out into the darkness outside, to weep and grind his teeth there.' "

THE CONTEXTS IN WHICH THESE PARABLES OF ENTRUSTED Wealth appear in Luke and Matthew are different, and there are considerable differences of detail. They have, however, fundamental resemblances and a similarity of function that suggest that they were versions of a single original rather than two distinct stories.

According to Luke, Jesus gave the parable "because he was near Jerusalem and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was immediately going to appear" (vs. 11). No such special reason for the parable is given by Matthew, although the same eschatological interest appears in the immediately preceding context (Matt. 24:44,50). The various sums are entrusted in Luke by a nobleman who "went to a distant country to secure his appointment to a kingdom and then return" (vs. 12), and in Matthew by "a man who was going on a journey" (vs. 14). While he was away, Luke says that the "countrymen" of the nobleman, who "hated him" and were apparently a different group from his slaves, "sent a delegation after him to say, 'We do not want this man made king over us' " (vss. 14,15). Matthew's ver-

sion of the story has no parallel for this aspect of the account. Matthew similarly has no equivalent for the Lukan award of rulership of a proportionate number of cities and for the punishment of the rebellious citizens. The distribution of funds in Matthew is "to each according to his ability," whereas according to Luke he "gave them each twenty dollars." Three reports are made in each version of the story, the first two in Matthew doubling the sums originally handled and in Luke increasing them ten and five times respectively. The third report in both is of inactivity based on the character of the master, and in each instance the sum is taken and given the slave who reported first.

Still a third version of the story is given in the Gospel according to the Hebrews. Three types of slaves are described: (1) he who "gained profit manifold" and was accepted; (2) he who "hid his talent" and was censured; and (3) he who "devoured his Lord's substance with harlots and flute girls" and was punished by imprisonment.

The homiletical interests of the evangelists are evident in the respective versions. These interests and the differences in the sources on which they drew account for the variations of detail and emphasis. It is not improbable that both Matthew and Luke knew the story in Q, the source they had in common, and that Matthew combined it in that form with a version which in some respects he preferred and which came to him in his source M.[1]

Whether in the source on which he drew or by his own embellishment, the imagery of the parable in Luke echoed a familiar sequence of historical events. In 47 B.C. Julius Caesar had made Herod the Great procurator of Galilee. In 41 B.C. Antony appointed him

[1] Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

tetrarch. In 40 B.C., Herod went to Rome to oppose the claims of Antigonus, and the Senate gave him the title of King of Judea (Jos. Antiq. XIV,vii,3; ix,2; xiii,1; xiv,4). Similarly, at the death of Herod the Great, Archelaus, who was made the chief beneficiary of Herod's will instead of Antipas, went to Rome to get his father's wishes confirmed. A delegation of Jews went to Rome to oppose him. The result was that Augustus confirmed the will but conditioned the title of king on Archelaus' establishment of his worthiness, so that he held only the title of ethnarch (Antiq. XVII,viii,1; ix,3; xi,4). In 4 B.C., Antipas went to Rome to urge his claims against those of Archelaus. The imagery of the parable seems to have been suggested by the journey of Archelaus.

Luke introduces the parable at an earlier point in the Markan narrative (10:52) than Matthew does (13:37). The three Gospels tell the story of the faith-healing of blindness as Jesus neared Jericho. In all three accounts, Jesus is hailed as "Son of David," and the intention seems to have been to represent the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah as the meaning of effective Christian faith. The problem that Luke confronts is that of maintaining the faith that Jesus is Messiah in view of the delay of the parousia. The sequence of materials in which the parable is given has that purpose as its explanation: the conversion of Zacchaeus (19:1-10); the parable of Entrusted Wealth (19:11-27), given "because he was near Jerusalem and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was immediatetly going to appear" (vs. 11); the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (19:29-44; cf. Mark 11:1-11 and Matt. 21:1-11); the cleansing of the Temple (19:45-48; cf. Mark 11:15-19 and Matt. 21:12-17). The effort of the evangelist was to create such conviction of the messiahship of Jesus that it would remain unshaken

even though the consummation of the messianic program was indefinitely delayed.

The keynote of the context of the parable in Matthew is the suddenness and certainty of the parousia (24:44, 50; 25:13); "Therefore you must be ready too, for the Son of Man is coming at a time when you do not expect him." It is a bad slave who says, "My master is going to stay a long time," and proceeds to act on that hypothesis (24:48). In illustration of his emphasis, the evangelist presents three parables of judgment: the Bridesmaids (25:1-13), Entrusted Wealth (25:14-30), and the Great Judgment (25:31-46).

The fundamental meaning of the parable for Luke and Matthew was the same. The delay of the parousia was an acute problem. Paul dealt with the problem in its earlier stages (I Thess. 4:13ff.; II Thess. 2; I Cor. 15:24-26). The Epistle to the Hebrews, the Fourth Gospel, and II Peter represent later ways of meeting the problem. The solution offered by Matthew and Luke comes at the intermediate point. Nowhere in the New Testament is there outright abandonment of the expectation of Jesus' return; delay is recognized, but more nearly in terms of decades than of centuries. The evangelists in the present instance recognize that the delay has already been long (Matt. 25:5,14,19; Luke 19:11) and that it might be still further prolonged. They meet the tendency to become lukewarm and discouraged by insisting that delay means opportunity for service in the interest of ends that will be recognized and rewarded when the unpredictable but none the less certain event comes to pass. Patience, promptness, diligence, brotherliness are the virtues that are commended for all Christians while they wait in confidence for God to act.

The rather large amounts and the statement that the

man "put his property in their hands" would seem to indicate the entrustment of all that the owner in the Matthaean story possessed. In Luke the amounts are smaller, and there is the definite instruction "to trade with it while he was gone." In neither instance are the sums gifts; they are funds with which to "carry on business" for the profit of the master.

Luke does not tell of the behavior of the slaves prior to the return of their master. Matthew, however, tells that "the man who had received the five thousand dollars *immediately* went into business with the money, and made five thousand more" and that "the man who had received two thousand" acted with similar promptitude and "made two thousand more" (vss. 16, 17). Matthew apparently felt that the parousia was imminent; and he accordingly places a stress on promptitude that is not so evident in Luke, where the emphasis is more definitely on patience.

The reckoning time in both accounts follows the return of the master, in Luke "when he had secured the appointment and returned" (vs. 15) and in Matthew when "long afterward, their master came back" (vs. 19). Three slaves report in both stories, the first two showing success and the third failure to increase his capital because of fear. The successful are rewarded in Luke by the rulership of a proportionate number of cities. In Matthew the reward is an opportunity to share their "master's enjoyment."

The third servant who reports in the parables has done nothing. He did not waste his fund but kept it intact and returned it without gain or loss. His fault was not that of prodigality, but of inaction. He claimed to have been frightened into doing nothing by the reputation of the master, but this excuse is shown to be a poor one in that had it been the real consideration it

would have operated in exactly the opposite fashion. The true account of his behavior is slothfulness, not fear. He misread the character of the master, as is indicated by the generosity shown the industrious slaves; and his error of judgment was not due to stupidity so much as to inertia.

In each instance, the fund handled by the inactive slave is taken from him and given to him who has made most by his trading. Luke records a protest against the award (vs. 25). It may have been the protest of the attendants in the story who were told to make the transfer, or it may have come from the audience of Jesus (cf. 12:41,42; 18:28,29) and expressed the feeling that such a turn spoiled the story. For Luke, it probably typified the friction between Jewish Christians and the growing Gentile element in the Church. No such problem arises in Matthew, since the original grants had been "to each according to his ability" and the rewards consisted in sharing the "master's enjoyment."

The slaughtering of the nobleman's enemies in the Lukan version and the thrusting of the "good-for-nothing slave out into the darkness outside, to weep and grind his teeth there" in the Matthaean story indicate that the analogy is to the final Judgment and suggests the destiny of sinners.

Religion, for Jesus, was a practical resource rather than a sentimental indulgence. It had contemporary reality instead of being merely a part of his traditional heritage. It belonged in the marketplace and by the fireside more nearly than in the desert. It was a practicable way of living from day to day. Isolation and seclusion were false to its essential genius. The risks of daring investment were a better analogy for it than the extreme caution of the "safety first" principle. It was in the process of everyday living that a righteousness

that deserved God's approval was to be realized. The multiplication of social contacts, not their reduction, was the mark of true devotion to God. It was while people were in the midst of their normal activities and for the sake of their truest effectiveness in these activities that they really sought and came to know God.

Jesus originally used the parable of Entrusted Wealth to illustrate these characteristic views of religion. The slave who merely "protected" what had been placed in his hands was the central figure in the story. He served to typify the self-centered complacency and the spirit of individual and national isolation that a thoroughly legalistic understanding of religion developed. By bringing him under the severest condemnation, Jesus intended to commend the superior view of religion to which he was himself so completely committed.

THE TWO SONS

MATTHEW 21:28-32

When he had entered the Temple, and was teaching, the high priests and the elders of the people came up to him, and said,

"What authority have you for doing as you do, and who gave you this authority?"

Jesus answered,

"Let me ask you one question, and if you answer it, I will tell you what authority I have for doing as I do. Where did John's baptism come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?"

And they argued with one another,

"If we say, 'It was from heaven,' he will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we have the people to fear, for they all consider John a prophet."

And they answered Jesus,

"We do not know."

He said to them,

"Nor will I tell you what authority I have for doing as I do. But what do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'My son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. Then the man went to the second son, and told him the same thing. And he answered 'I will not!' But afterward he changed his mind and went. Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

They said,

"The second one."

Jesus said to them,

"I tell you, the tax-collectors and prostitutes are going into the Kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you with a way of uprightness, and you would not believe him. The tax-collectors and prostitutes believed him, but even after seeing that, you would not change your minds and believe him!"

LUKE HAS A PARABLE OF TWO SONS (15:11-32) THAT bears certain marks of resemblance to the present story found only in Matthew. In each, a son who is at first disobedient and disappointing to his father develops a truly filial spirit, whereas the son who makes a better outward and formal appearance of sonship turns out to be alien and servile in spirit. The theme was one that Jesus probably used many times with the variety of illustration of which his genius was so capable. That the stories are respectively peculiar to the evangelists reporting them is due to their transmission in written sources

available to one and not the other writer. It would appear that Matthew drew the present story from his source M.

The closing verses of the parable (31*b*,32), which so severely condemn "the high priests and the elders of the people" (vs. 23), are paralleled in Luke's eulogy of John the Baptist (7:29,30; cf. Matt. 11:11-14). They were probably not originally a part of the parable and were brought into their present association to give the story an application that suited the evangelist's theme.

The context in which the parable appears illuminates Matthew's understanding and use of it. The thought sequence goes back to the acclamation of Jesus as Messiah by "two blind men sitting by the roadside" as he left Jericho (20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43). There follows the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44), in which the multitudes similarly acclaim him, and the cleansing of the Temple (21:12,13; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48), when he deliberately acted in the messianic role. The "high priests and the scribes," disturbed both by the acclamations of the people and by Jesus' own behavior, seek a disavowal from him, and instead get the equivalent of an affirmation of his messiahship (vss. 14-16, without parallel in Mark and Luke). Jesus retires for the night to Bethany (vs. 17), and as he returns to Jerusalem next morning destroys a fig tree from which he has expected to gather fruit, because he "found nothing on it but leaves (vss. 18-22; Mark 11:12-14,20-25).[1] While he is teaching in the Temple, "the high priests and elders of the people" approach him with their demand for credentials; and Jesus counters with the ques-

[1] The slightly different order of events in Mark is: the triumphal entry, the retirement for the night to Bethany, the cursing of the fig tree, and then the cleansing of the Temple.

tion about John's baptism (vss. 23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8). There follow three parables in which the Jewish leaders are evidently the objects of severe condemnation, as they themselves perceive (vss. 45,46), and which move them to conspire with the Herodians against Jesus (22:15). The parable of the Two Sons is the first of this series of parables.

The parable serves to express the evangelist's characterization of the religion of Jewish leadership and to present it in an exceedingly unfavorable light. Those leaders, so wise in their own estimation and so sure of their own authority, were actually afflicted with a blindness more serious than that of the "two blind men sitting by the roadside," who recognized Jesus and were healed. With better opportunities than the multitudes of common people had, they obdurately closed their eyes to the many convincing evidences presented to them and so brought upon themselves and upon the nation the deserved condemnation of God. Theirs was a religion of pretense, and in their supposed service of God they sought their own exaltation. Like the son in the parable, theirs was only a lip service. This explains the sense of shock that the reader is apt to experience in the closing statements of the parable (vss. 31,32). The answer to the question about which son was truly obedient appears to have been equally "discreet" with that of Mark 12:32f., where Jesus rejoins, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." But the evangelist is making his case against the Synagogue leaders of his own day, and so adds these verses to give the story the desired application.

There was, assuredly, a very real clash between Jesus and the leaders of the church of his day. The arrangement of the context and the application given the parable here, however, belong more probably to the

atmosphere of bitter conflict between the Synagogue and the Church during the last quarter of the first century than to the circumstances in which Jesus' differences with contemporary leaders developed.

The manuscripts present more than a single form of the parable. According to some of them, the positions of the sons are reversed, making the one who answers, "I will, sir," the first, and having the Jewish leaders declare him to be the true son. That brings the parable into agreement with the application (vs. 31*b*), which automatically creates a doubt of authenticity. The more usual reading has the first son answer, "I will not!" thus creating a natural reason for the request of the second son. The latter is the preference of the Revised Version. The Goodspeed translation adopts the less likely reading in the matter of the order of the answers of the sons but saves the sense of the story in having the Jewish leaders answer (vs. 31), "The second one." [2]

The son who deceived his father employed the language of respect and deference. So far as verbal protestations were concerned, he gave the impression of fidelity. Brusqueness characterized the reply of the son who at first refused but later repented and obeyed his father's wishes. The implication of the question put forward by the behavior of the two sons is plainly that the penitent sinner is preferable in God's sight to the man whose practice fails to harmonize with his professions.

"Tax-collectors and prostitutes" were as far removed from inclusion in the Kingdom of God as could be imagined. Yet Jesus is represented (vs. 31*b*) as saying that they would be admitted ahead of and in preference

[2] Goodspeed translates the Westcott & Hort text here in preference to the text used by the "Revisers" and presented in Alexander Souter's Greek New Testament.

to the leaders of the Jewish church. This judgment involved a radical reversal of the way the world looked at the matter (cf. Luke 18: 10-14). The ostracized classes of society were thus described as actually ahead of their thoroughly respectable and as thoroughly pretentious leaders in "the road . . . that leads to life" (cf. Matt. 7:14,15).

In the context of the ministry of Jesus, the parable of the Two Sons probably had no association with the references to John the Baptist. On an occasion that is beyond identification, it may well have been used to illustrate the equivalence of faith and obedience. It sounds as though it were an exposition of the principle, "It is not everyone who says to me 'Lord! Lord!' who will get into the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). It is the old and often emphasized message of the prophets that fidelity can find no more appropriate expression than obedience and that behavior that accords with the professions of piety alone constitutes righteousness. Men judge by appearances, and their appraisals are further qualified by a confused scale of values. God, by contrast, sees beyond the surface to the center of things and is moved exclusively by moral fact.

THE CRUEL VINEDRESSERS

MATTHEW 21:33-44

Listen to another figure. "There was a land owner who planted a vineyard and fenced it in, and hewed out a winevat in it, and built a watch-tower, and leased it to tenants, and left the neighborhood. When the time for the vintage approached he sent his slaves to the tenants to receive his share. But the tenants took his slaves and beat one and killed another and stoned a third. Again he sent other slaves and more of them than he had sent at first, and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw his son, they said to one another, 'This is his heir! Come on, let us kill him, and get his inheritance!' So they took him and drove him out of the vineyard and killed him. When the owner of the vineyard comes back, therefore, what will he do to these tenants?" They said to him, "He will put the wretches to a miserable death, and let the vineyard to other tenants who will give him his share of the vintage when it is due." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures,

'That stone which the builders rejected
Has become the cornerstone;
This came from the Lord,
And seems marvelous to us'?

That, I tell you, is why the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a people that will produce its proper fruit. Whoever falls on that stone will be shattered, but whoever it falls upon will be pulverized." When the high priests and the Pharisees heard his figures, they knew that he was speaking about them, and they wanted to have him arrested, but they were afraid of the people, for the people considered him a prophet.

MARK 12:1-11

Then he began to speak to them in figures. "A man once planted a vineyard and fenced it in and hewed out a wine-vat and built a watch-tower, and he leased it to tenants and left the neighborhood. At the proper time he sent a slave to the tenants to get from them a share of the vintage. And they took him and beat him and sent him back empty-handed. And again he sent another slave to them. And they beat him over the head and treated him shamefully. And he sent another; and him they killed; and so with many others, some they beat and some they killed. He still had one left to send, a dearly loved son. He sent him to them last of all, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But the tenants said to one another, 'This is his heir! Come on, let us kill him, and the property will belong to us!' So they took him and killed him, and threw his body outside of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come back and put the tenants to death and give the vineyard to others. Did you never read this passage of Scripture:

'That stone which the builders rejected
Has become the cornerstone;
This came from the Lord
And seems marvelous to us'?"

And they tried to have him arrested, but they were afraid of the people, for they knew that the illustration was aimed at them. And they left him and went away.

LUKE 20:9-18

Then he went on to give the people this illustration: "A man once planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went away for a long absence. And at the proper time he sent a slave to the tenants to have them give him a share of the vintage, but the tenants beat him, and sent him back empty-handed. And again he sent another slave, and they beat him also and mistreated him and sent him back empty-handed. And again he sent a third, but they wounded him too, and threw him outside. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What can I do? I will send them my dear son; perhaps they will respect him.' But when the tenants saw him, they argued with one another, 'This is his heir! Let us kill him, so that the property will belong to us!' So they drove him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and put those tenants to death, and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this they said, "Heaven forbid!" He looked at them and said, "Then what does this saying of Scripture mean,

'That stone which the builders rejected
Has become the cornerstone'?

Whoever falls on that stone will be shattered, but whoever it falls upon will be pulverized."

STORY AND THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION ARE SO NEARLY indistinguishable as to raise the question of the propriety of including the Cruel Vinedressers in a study of the parables.[1] It is possible that the original parable remains if verses 5*b*-8 and 9*b*-11 of Mark with the corresponding parallels in Matthew and Luke are viewed as theological amplification. This is not a certainty, however, and it may be that the entire section is an allegorical statement of the theology of the primitive Church. The material is ordinarily included in the works on parables and is for that reason treated here.

The story and its application appear in the three Gospels with interesting variations and similarities. The audience in Luke is "the people" (vs. 9), in Mark "the high priests, scribes, and elders" (11:27), and in

[1] Martin Dibelius, *The Message of Jesus Christ,* translated into English by Frederick C. Grant (New York: Scribner, 1939), p. 154.

Matthew "the high priests and Pharisees" (vs. 45). The details of the fence, the wine-vat, and the watch-tower, present in Matthew and Mark, are lacking in Luke. In describing the treatment of the slaves sent to collect the owner's share, Matthew speaks of them in the plural as beaten, killed, and stoned and of "other slaves" sent as "treated in the same way" (vss. 35,36). Mark and Luke speak of the slaves singly and specify the treatment each received. Matthew and Luke describe the "heir" as driven out of the vineyard and then killed (cf. Heb. 13:12), whereas Mark says that "they took him and killed him, and threw his body outside of the vineyard" (vs. 8). The three accounts quote Psalm 118:22 at the same juncture, with Matthew and Luke adding materials drawn from Isaiah 8:14,15 and Daniel 2:34,35,44. Matthew alone has the statement (vs. 43), "That, I tell you, is why the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a people that will produce its proper fruit." Luke alone has the outcry of dread (vs. 16), "Heaven forbid!" Matthew presumably followed his habit of combining Mark and the Q source for the formation of his version of the material. Luke, as was his custom, preferred the Q source to Mark and followed it rather closely. That relation of the versions to their sources is, perhaps, the best explanation of the agreements and differences noted.

The general setting in the three Gospels is the same. Jesus has been acclaimed Messiah while in the vicinity of Jericho. He has deliberately acted in that role in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and in the cleansing of the Temple. The official leaders of the Jewish church demand convincing credentials of him, and he counters with the question about the baptism of John. When they answer, "We do not know," Jesus, interpreting their answer as subtlety rather than ignorance, rejoins,

"Nor will I tell you what authority I have for doing as I do" (Mark 11:33; Matt. 21:27; Luke 20:8). His refusal is not adhered to, however, because the Cruel Vinedressers and the application that is appended constitute for the evangelists the answer to the question. Matthew's report of Jesus' answer is amplified by his interposing of the parable of the Two Sons.

The context in all of the Gospels leaves no doubt of the meaning of this body of teaching for the evangelists. It is more allegory than parable, as they understand and present it. Israel is the vineyard and God the owner. The prophets have been sent from time to time, but their efforts to inspire the nation to carry out its proper mission have been almost entirely futile. The "cruel vinedressers" are the official Jewish leaders of Jesus' time, and, typically, of other periods as well. Jesus is clearly the "heir," and his coming represents the climax of God's effort throughout history to make himself known to and become the sovereign of his people. The death of Jesus is assumed and constitutes the basis for the disavowal of the Jewish nation as any longer God's vineyard and the substitution of the Christian Church in its place of privilege and service. The Church is regarded as enjoying its advantageous relationship to God because Christ has been made its "Cornerstone." By the same warrant, all who oppose the Church will be destroyed.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the practical annihilation of Jewish national life, anticipated in Mark and viewed in retrospect in Matthew and Luke, influenced the formulation of the allegory and tended to validate its viewpoint for the leadership of the primitive Church. The teaching represents not so much an anticipation of what would happen as reflection upon what had happened.

Jesus usually drew the materials for his parables from life about him. To a limited degree, the imagery in the present instance is of that sort. More largely, however, the Old Testament is drawn upon for the figures, and this fact strengthens the impression of the secondary character of the material.

"Share-cropping" was the method by which the lands of large owners were cultivated. The widespread unrest throughout Palestine during New Testament times was largely the result of distressing economic conditions and reflected the oppression under which the people lived.[2] It was not unprecedented for tenants to resist the demands of landlords. The elaborate equipment of the vineyard would indicate that the landlord in the story expected substantial returns on his investment. The system that is implied was one that encouraged dishonesty and invited dispute.

The vineyard imagery roots in the Old Testament. Isaiah employed it to illustrate Jehovah's relationship to Israel (5:1-7; cf. Ps. 80; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15:1-6; 19:1-14; Hos. 10:1; Deut. 32:32ff.). God is pictured as having treated Israel generously, and Israel's response as having been entirely devoid of appreciation. The leadership of the Church made capital out of this Old Testament representation and formulated their case against the contemporary leaders of the Synagogue from their own Scriptures. They assumed the transfer of God's favor from the Synagogue to the Church and that the leaders of the Church had been made the channel for divine revelation. By contrast with the vitally inspired leadership of the Church, Jewish leaders were pictured as self-centered, as having lost sight of God, as having betrayed the people who trusted them and who were

[2] F. C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926).

ever God's concern, and as having completely misread the Scriptures.

The description of the mistreatment of successive messengers of God follows Old Testament patterns. The author of Second Chronicles had drawn the picture with a vividness hardly capable of improvement (36:11-17):

"Zedekiah . . . became obstinate and stubbornly refused to turn to the Lord. . . . Also all the chiefs of the priests and the people proved utterly faithless. . . . Still the Lord, the God of their fathers, eagerly sent to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people, . . . but they mocked God's messengers and despised his words and derided his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people till there was no remedy."

Nehemiah (9:26-31; cf. I Kings 18:13; 22:27; II Chron. 24:20) says to the same effect:

"Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against thee and cast thy law behind their back and slew thy prophets, who testified against them to turn them again to thee. . . . Therefore thou didst deliver them into the hands of their adversaries, who tormented them. Then in the time of their distress, when they cried to thee, thou heardest . . . and . . . didst give them deliverers. . . . But as soon as they had rest, they did evil again before thee."

The description of the behavior of the tenants is colored by the troubled times in Palestine. They seem determined from the start to ignore the landlord's claims to rent. They refuse to acknowledge at all the ordinary obligations of tenants. Their treatment of the "heir" seems to be on the hypothesis that the property has been turned over to him and that by killing him the title to the vineyard will pass to them—a thing that could

happen only in a time of revolution. For the evangelists, this would have the meaning that the very death of Jesus involves an implicit confession of his messiahship on the part of those who crucified him.

The teaching section is brought to a close with a quotation from Psalm 118:22,23. The original reference is to the recovery of Israel from national disaster. The walls of Jerusalem have been rebuilt, and Zion is pictured as destined to become the center of God's earthly rule. Her powerful neighbors hold her in contempt, but she looks beyond them and the types of power on which they rely to God for the accomplishment of her mission. The psalm probably came from the Maccabaean period and regarded the Maccabaean dynasty as the cornerstone of a restored national life.

The shift in imagery from "tenants" to "builders" involves the use of well established Christian forms of thought. It has an interesting parallel in Paul's statement to the Corinthians (I Cor. 3:9): "For we are fellow-laborers for God, and you are *God's farm, God's building.*" The "building" is the Christian community viewed as the Church, and it is regarded as bound to survive all efforts to destroy it (cf. Acts 4: 11; Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:7). In "God's building," Christ is the "cornerstone" (I Cor. 3:11,12; Rom. 9:33). Foolish workmen who reject this "stone" fail utterly to prevent its being properly placed in the completed building, and instead invite destruction upon themselves. Just as the killing of the "heir" fails to make the vineyard the property of the tenants but rather seals their sentence of death, so the rejection of the "stone" means defeat for the builders.

Luke alone has the outcry (20:16), "Heaven forbid!" This is the only occurrence of the phrase in the New Testament outside Paul's letters. In Paul's letters, it

occurs twice in Galatians, once in I Corinthians, and ten times in Romans. It regularly expresses a vigorous rejection of a false conclusion. It may have that meaning here, whoever the speakers are. It may refer to the "heir" or to the Jewish leaders. In the one instance, it would express the hope that the "heir" would never be so treated, in which event the reply is (vs. 17*b*) that the Scripture foretells the rejection of the "heir," now referred to as the "stone." Or again, it may express the hope that God will never abrogate his covenant with Israel and utterly abandon his chosen people.

The added statement in Matthew and Mark, not present in Luke, "This came from the Lord," has a twofold meaning: (1) the rejected "stone" came from God, and (2) God reversed the stupid misjudgment of men. As used by the evangelists, the allusion is to the rejection of Jesus by Jewish leaders and his vindication by God in the resurrection and exaltation to a place of honor in heaven.

Matthew alone has the statement (vs. 43) about the Kingdom of God being taken away from the Jews "and given to a people that will produce its proper fruit." He has in mind the exclusion of the Jews from God's favor as unworthy and the substitution of the Christians as "a people that will produce the proper fruit." The "proper fruit" would include the acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah and the unqualified acceptance of the implications of obedience to him in living as though the Kingdom had fully come.

According to Luke's final statement (vs. 18), the "stone" becomes two stones or rather functions successively in two ways: men stumble on it, and it falls upon and pulverizes the obdurate (cf. Isa. 8:14,15; Dan. 2:34, 44,45). It expresses the threat of annihilation of those who oppose the "stone" by opposing the Church. The

verse has got into Matthew (vs. 44), but it appears to be an interpolation under the influence of Luke and not an original part of the text.

Mark is indefinite (vs. 12) about who it was that tried to have Jesus arrested. Matthew, however, says that "the high priests and the Pharisees" perceived that "he was speaking about them" and for that reason "wanted to have him arrested" (vss. 45,46).

If the section can in any sense be attributed to Jesus, it must have been, as Rawlinson suggests, "a supreme appeal to the conscience of our Lord's opponents, reminding them of God's infinite patience . . . and of His justice too, by which they themselves were threatened." [3]

[3] A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Methuen & Co., 1925), p. 162.

THE WEDDING BANQUET OF THE KING'S SON

MATTHEW 22:1-14

THIS PARABLE HAS ALREADY BEEN DISCUSSED (PAGE 119) as a parallel version of Luke's story of the Great Feast. The text and the discussion are not repeated. Only the complete difference of context justifies this further treatment. The exposition here is restricted to the meaning and function of the parable in the message of the first evangelist.

The "wedding feast" as imagery for the Messianic Banquet was a distinctly Christian development. It suggested the heavenly counterpart of the mystical union between Christ and the Church. Paul preceded the writers of the Gospels in effectively using the figure (I Cor. 12:27; Col. 1: 18), and leaders of the later gospel writing period greatly elaborated the conception (Eph. 3:6; 4:12-16; 5:25-27,32; Rev. 19:7,9; 21:2,9,17; John 2: 21; 3:29; etc.). Matthew's usage here belongs to that development.

The parable is the third of a trilogy in Matthew's arrangement, the other two being the Two Sons and the Cruel Vinedressers. The thought connects with that of 21:31,41,46. The antipathy and obtuseness of the Jewish leaders as illustrated in their desire to have Jesus arrested is made the immediate occasion for this third parable. The parable pictures the rejection of the Jews, or at least of their official leaders, and the substitution in their stead of the humble and repentant both within and beyond Judaism. However, of those admitted to the Wedding Banquet a further sifting becomes necessary, and it results in a further rejection. It is the representation of that

rejection that gives the parable of the Wedding Robe (22:11-14) its place and connection.

There is an interruption of the context in verses 6,7. The Lukan version of the story has no parallel for these verses. They are generally taken to refer to the sack of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 and to express the interpretation of that terrible event by the evangelist as the visitation of divine wrath because of the death of Jesus and the persecution of Christian missionaries. The Roman armies are viewed as God's armies in the sense that he uses them as instrumentalities of vengeance. Interestingly, the banquet proceeds after the city has been burned, just as though it were not the city of the king himself and of the guests who did actually attend.

The note (vs. 10) that the guests who filled the banquet hall were a mixture of good and bad is peculiar to Matthew. It reminds of the figure of the Kingdom as a "net that was let down into the sea, and inclosed fish of all kinds" (13:47). It is there specifically indicated that the sorting of the good and bad fish illustrates "what will happen at the close of the age." In the present context, the idea looks forward to the further story of the Wedding Robe (vss. 11-14), which makes explicit the problem of unworthy members within the Christian community. The note, though foreign to the sense of the parable, is vital to its meaning for the evangelist. The injustice and lack of logic in expecting guests recruited from the crossroads to be properly dressed disappear when it is seen that for Matthew they are symbols and not real people and that the wedding robe is the new righteousness (cf. Eph. 6:14; Rev. 3:4,5) that is so qualitatively distinctive and superior as to "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees."

The Wedding Robe may originally have been an

independent parable. Its opening may have been unknown to the evangelist, or he may deliberately have deleted it as not serving his own purposes. It is subjoined to the parable of the Wedding Banquet to show that mere acceptance of the invitation was insufficient. Guests must remember the character of their host and the dignity of the occasion and must perceive that the importance of responsiveness is matched by that of fitness.

The Church of the evangelist's day required this warning that its own membership would be sifted on the day of Judgment. Not all who had heard the message of the Kingdom and who had attached themselves to the Church exemplified the spirit and character of true discipleship. A sharp line needed to be drawn between a theoretical and nominal attachment to the Christian cause and the fidelity that would validate itself in concrete deed and valorous service. The rejection of the Jews was a notorious fact of history, and it was important that Christians see in it meanings for themselves. It was not Jewishness, per se, that constituted unworthiness, but rather a type of spiritual remissness that might just as well bring condemnation upon Gentile Christians. The warning, like that which Paul sounded in an earlier day (Rom. 11:13-24), was against presumption and was intended to make the basis of divine approval ethical rather than racial.

The moral of the teaching is pointed (vs. 14) by a statement that is full of difficulties and that seems not to leave acceptance with God on a purely spiritual basis: "For many are *called* but few *elected.*" It is to be remembered that Paul speaks of himself as a "called" apostle and of his converts as "called of Jesus Christ" and as "called saints." He furthermore, in effect, practically identifies "calling" and "election" (Rom. 8:33;

9:11; 11:5,7,28; I Thess. 1:4; cf. II Pet. 1:10; I Tim. 5:21; II Tim. 2:10; Tit. 1:1; Rev. 17:14).

The conceptions of "calling" and "election" had Old Testament roots. They applied to the nation as having a divine destiny and as having been chosen by God for a special role. Failure on the part of national Israel led in later Jewish thought to the idea of an "elect" remnant (Wisd. of Sol. 3:9; 4:15; Enoch 1:1; 5:7; 25:5). The idea was never exclusively predestinarian, but it laid less stress on human freedom and initiative than most modern thought finds congenial. Without in the least reducing the missionary zeal of the primitive Christian church, this way of understanding events after they had happened served to give a providential explanation to the limited success of the ministry of Jesus as seen in the relatively small membership of the Christian community.

THE WISE AND FOOLISH BRIDESMAIDS

MATTHEW 25:1-13

"Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were foolish and five were sensible. For the foolish ones brought their lamps but brought no oil with them, but the sensible ones with their lamps brought oil in their flasks. As the bridegroom was slow in coming, they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But in the middle of the night there was a shout 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out and meet him!' Then all the bridesmaids awoke, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the sensible ones answered, 'There may not be enough for us and you. You had better go to the dealers and buy yourselves some.' But while they were gone to buy it, the bridegroom arrived, and the ones that were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was closed. Afterward the other bridesmaids came and said, 'Sir! Sir! Open the door for us!' But he answered, 'I tell you, I do not know you!' So you must be on the watch, for you do not know either the day or the hour."

THIS PARABLE IS THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF THREE STORIES, all of them illustrating aspects of the Judgment: the Bridesmaids (vss. 1-13), the Entrusted Wealth (vss. 14-30), and the Great Judgment (vss. 31-46). The teaching emphases are, respectively, alertness, activity, humaneness. Christians are to live in the momentary expectation of the parousia. The waiting time must not be spent in idleness, however, but in the kind of activities that best express the spirit of the Kingdom. What those activities are is suggested in the Judgment scene (vss. 31-46), where those who have bestirred themselves in the approved ways are commended.

The theme of the series is stated in the immediately preceding context (24:42,44,50): "You must be on the watch, for you do not know on what day your Master is coming. . . . You must be ready too, for the Son of Man is coming at a time when you do not expect him."

The present story is found only in Matthew. It sounds very much like the similar Lukan story, however (12:35-40), where the climax is also a definite

allusion to the parousia (vs. 40), "You must be ready too, for the Son of Man is coming at a time when you do not expect him." It is possible that the present story is an allegory built around the simpler framework and identifying the Bridegroom as Christ and the Bridesmaids as the waiting Church.

The story is an excellent embodiment of the eschatological expectations of the early Church. There is the expectation that the Messiah may appear at any moment. The apparent delay of his coming sorely tries the eagerness of Christians but must not dull their alertness. On the contrary, unexpectedness ought to create constant readiness rather than lethargy. The "wise" will leave the time entirely in God's hands and will concentrate on being ready. After the coming of the Messiah, all opportunity for getting ready for the Judgment will have passed. Preparation for the Judgment cannot be by one person for another. Each individual must accept responsibility for his own qualification.

During the last quarter of the first century and continuing on into the second century, the failure of the parousia was an acute problem for the Church. The Fourth Evangelist met it by spiritualizing the main items in the eschatological program. The author of Hebrews, while not going as far as the author of the Fourth Gospel, undertook to maintain enthusiasm by offering a more stimulating idea for Christian reflection, namely, the finality of Christianity as a religion in view of the perfection of the revelation of God in Christ. In II Peter, there was the effort to resuscitate the older expectation and to condemn as "mockers" any who believed otherwise (3:3,4): "In the last days mockers will come with their mockeries, going where their passions lead and saying, 'Where is his promised coming?

For ever since our forefathers fell asleep everything has remained as it was from the beginning of creation!' "

The story of the Bridesmaids appears to have been another instance in which there was the effort to explain the inherited eschatology. It does this by insisting that the time element is in God's hands and that readiness is man's one responsibility. The realism and vividness of the older expectation are retained. The parousia will be sudden and the issues of the Judgment final. The note of urgency is further accentuated by the understanding on the part of the evangelist that the destruction of Jerusalem in some sense heralded the beginning of the end and that the final events of the last days are near at hand.

It has to be borne in mind, of course, that Jesus himself thought of the Kingdom as coming suddenly. He urged repentance in terms of the imminence of Judgment. He seems to have been sorely perplexed when deferment of his hopes seemed inevitable. A possible interpretation of his final trip to Jerusalem is that it was his supreme effort to move God to action for the inauguration of the Kingdom.[1] The details of the present section of teaching, however, are all more intelligible if interpreted as the effort of the Church to explain the delay of the parousia and to urge the necessity of using the waiting period in preparation for the Judgment.

The identity of the maidens in the story is uncertain. They were hardly guests or wedding attendants. They were possibly servants in the household of the bride's father (cf. Tob. 6:13; 8:19; 11:19; Judg. 14:10-18), but they were as probably the daughters of neighbors in the village where the bride lived. Their number "ten"

[1] J. Warschauer, *The Historical Life of Christ* (New York: Macmillan, 1926).

may have symbolized completeness and have represented the whole Christian community in its admixture of members who were zealous and purely nominal. The waiting group typify the Church rather than the Kingdom. They look forward to the coming of the Kingdom and desire to enter it when it comes (cf. Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:20,21; Tit. 2:13; II Pet. 3:12,13). The division into "wise" and "foolish" illustrates readiness and the lack of readiness for the parousia. The "wise" had additional oil in jars, and the "foolish" had only what was in their lamps.

The oil signified whatever constituted readiness. All three parables in the present series would probably illustrate what this was. It was something that everyone had to possess in his own right. The directions of the "wise" to the "foolish" maidens that they "go . . . and buy" for themselves was neither ironical nor selfish. The shops were, presumably, still open, but it remained nevertheless inadvisable and risky to make preparations at the last minute. The atmosphere is clearly that of the Apostolic Church, where readiness for the coming of the Son of Man is the only thing that counts (Matt. 24:36,42,44,50; cf. I Cor. 16:13; Acts 20:31; etc.). The only safe time to get ready was before the parousia. After that event, Judgment and the fixing of eternal destinies awaited (cf. Heb. 10:27,31).

THE JUDGMENT OF THE SON OF MAN

MATTHEW 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his splendor, with all his angels with him, he will take his seat on his glorious throne, and all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them from one another, just as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. Then the king will say to those at his right, 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take possession of the kingdom which has been destined for you from the creation of the world. For when I was hungry, you gave me food, when I was thirsty you gave me something to drink, when I was a stranger, you invited me to your homes, when I had no clothes, you gave me clothes, when I was sick, you looked after me, when I was in prison, you came to see me.' Then the upright will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food, or thirsty, and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger, and invite you home, or without clothing, and supply you with it? When did we see you sick or in prison, and go to see you?' The king will answer, 'I tell you, in so far as you did it to one of the humblest of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left, 'Begone, you accursed people, to the everlasting fire destined for the devil and his angels! For when I was hungry, you gave me nothing to eat, and when I was thirsty you gave me nothing to drink, when I was a stranger, you did not invite me home, when I had no clothes, you did not supply me, when I was sick and in prison, you did not look after me.' Then they in their turn will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or in need of clothes, or sick, or in prison, and did not wait upon you? Then he will answer, 'I tell you, in so far as you failed to do it for one of these people who are humblest, you failed to do it for me.' Then they will go away to everlasting punishment, and the upright to everlasting life."

THE JUDGMENT OF THE SON OF MAN BRINGS TO COMPLETION the discourse based on the request of the disciples (24:3,4), "Tell us when this is to happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the close of the age." The parable of Entrusted Wealth emphasizes the active use of opportunity while disciples wait for the parousia. The Judgment scene serves to give concreteness to distinctly Christian activity by making the final destinies hinge upon modes of behavior that the Son of Man approves: feeding the hungry, being hospitable to

strangers, clothing the destitute, showing solicitude for the sick, visiting the prisoners.

A merely theoretical attachment to the cause of Christ is definitely repudiated. All those who stood before the King addressed him as "Lord," but this uniformity of confession was not matched as uniformly by a devotion of social outreach and moral emphasis. The evangelist has laid hold with impressive clearness of insight on one of the most distinctive elements in Jesus' interpretation of religion, the separate and distinct value of every individual human being in the sight of God. Nothing of a tendency to limit the application of love to members of the Christian community appears here (cf. 10:42; 18:5), but only the profound concern for persons on the basis of their inestimable preciousness to God.

The actual basis of the Judgment is emphasized by the surprise of both the approved and the condemned. Deeds that express love require no sectarian accreditation but stand by their inherent merit. Creedal correctness has no bearing on behavior that involves real significance for the welfare of persons. Sound social meaning creates religious soundness. As Montefiore says in commenting on the teaching: "There need not even be the conscious thought that it is done for Christ or in his name. . . . The loving deed is enough. No purer account, no more exquisite delineation of Christian philanthropy was ever penned. It is broad, liberal, and truly religious." [1]

Throughout the discourse, Jesus and the Son of Man are identified. The identification is more distinctly in the interest of social and ethical values than of speculative theology and has the effect of translating the Messiah of traditional apocalypticism (cf. I Enoch 46,49,50,51) out of angelic transcendancy into sympa-

[1] *Op. cit.*, II, 324.

thetic humanity. The achievement is very similar in its religious implications with that of Hebrews (2:18; 5:8; 13:12-16). By making the Son of Man one with all human sufferers and with the least among the world's needy, love is declared to be the principle of the inmost heart of God, and sympathy becomes the principle of coherence in the cosmos.

The section as a whole is more a homily than a parable. It is expressed in the popularly accepted framework of apocalyptic eschatology. The title "Son of Man" has the content that belongs to it in I Enoch,[2] an angelic being who belonged to the divine sphere of existence but who acted for God in earthly matters. He was expected to preside in the Judgment and to be the active agent in the inauguration of the Kingdom. The risen and exalted Christ is identified with the Son of Man, and all of the functions traditionally assigned to the latter were, for the evangelist and his audience, associated with the former.

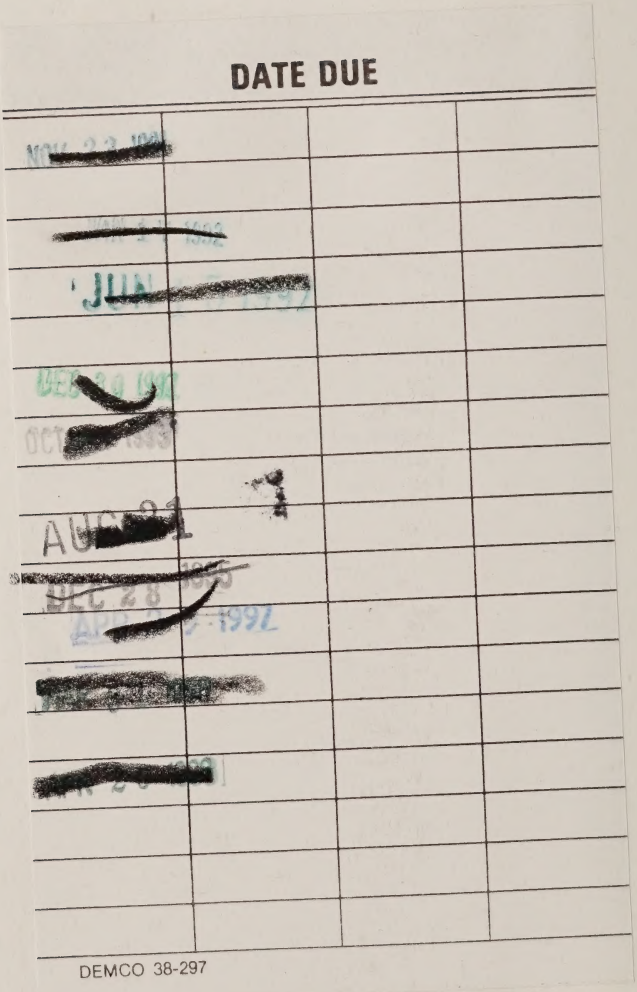
The idea of a general resurrection for Judgment is

[2] I Enoch 46: "And there I saw One who had a head of days, and His head was white like wool, and with Him was another being whose countenance had the appearance of a man, and his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels. And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was, and why he went with the Head of Days? And he answered and said unto me: This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness, with whom dwelleth righteousness, and who revealeth all treasures of that which is hidden, because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him, and whose lot hath pre-eminence before the Lord of Spirits in uprightness forever. And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen shall raise up the kings and the mighty from their seats, and the strong from off their thrones, and shall loosen the reins of the strong, and break the teeth of sinners."

I Enoch 48: "And at that hour that Son of Man was named in the presence of the Lord of Spirits, and his name before the Head of Days. Yea, before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars of the heaven were made, his name was named before the Lord of Spirits. He shall be a staff to the righteous whereon to stay themselves and not fall, and he shall be the light of the Gentiles, and the hope of those who are troubled of heart."

taken for granted (cf. Dan. 12:2; I Enoch 51; IV Esdr. 7:32; 14:35). The Kingdom is described (vs. 34) as "destined" for the righteous "from the creation of the world." Similarly (vs. 42), "the everlasting fire" is said to have been "destined" (not "from the creation of the world," however) "for the devil and his angels." The thought may be that evil was not originally intended and represents an intrusion in the world. It is not the normal destiny for men to come under the dominion of the devil and thus share his fate, and they who do so betray their vocation.

"Fire" is a symbol of punishment, and "eternal" almost certainly means everlasting (vss. 41,46). Those who are disapproved are described as "accursed"; they do not belong to God. Their prospect is, as described in Hebrews (10:27,31), only "judgment and that blazing indignation which is to devour God's enemies," which makes it indeed "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The imagery of the "sheep" and the "goats" was not new (cf. Ezek. 34:17,20f.; Cant. 4:1; 6:5; etc.). The contrast seems to be between gentleness and value on the one hand and violence and valuelessness of the other. Both sheep and goats were in the flock. "All the nations" (vs. 32) are described as arranged before the Son of Man, but the concern of the evangelist was, perhaps, more definitely with the Christian community itself with its worthy and unworthy members.

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